

ATTENDANCE



**Scrutineer
Handbook**

**Local Government
Election Information Series**



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Victorian Electoral Commission, Melbourne

Handbook for Scrutineers at Council Elections

Attendance Voting

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to assist scrutineers in Victorian municipal council elections conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission. It outlines those aspects of electoral law that relate directly to scrutineers. However, the handbook should not be seen as a substitute for the law, and should be read in conjunction with the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act) and the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005 (the Regulations), copies of which may be purchased from:

Information Victoria
505 Little Collins Street
Melbourne 3000.

Phone: 1300 366 356 (toll free); or

on the Victorian Government website www.vic.gov.au

Scrutineers are appointed by candidates to represent their interests by ensuring the impartiality of the election process. The role of scrutineers is defined by the Act and the Regulations and is distinct from the role of candidate helpers or supporters.

Scrutineers have the right to observe certain electoral activities prior to the close of voting and also to observe the counting of votes. They may challenge the decisions on formality of ballot papers made by the authorised persons. They may not wear or display a badge, emblem or political slogan of a candidate whilst performing their functions.

Authorised persons are not full-time employees of the Victorian Electoral Commission. They are appointed only for the period of the election and are often required to work under considerable pressure to ensure that elections are conducted smoothly and results obtained in an orderly way. Scrutineers must co-operate with the authorised persons and refrain from making unreasonable requests or queries. Any misconduct or failure to obey the lawful directions of the Returning Officer is an offence and the offender may be removed by the police.

Intending scrutineers should note that they must be appointed by the candidate and sign the declaration on the Appointment and Declaration of Scrutineer form available from the Returning Officer.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Absent Voting | Absent voting is available to voters who attend a voting centre outside their ward and within the boundaries of the municipality. There is no absent voting across councils. |
| Authorised Person | A person appointed by the Returning Officer to assist in the conduct of the election, counting of votes and other duties. |
| Candidate | A person who nominates to contest an election for a ward of a municipality. |
| Canvassing | Soliciting of votes at an election for a candidate or group of candidates. |
| Close of Voting | The last day for ballot material to be accepted in the count. |
| Computer Count | The electronic counting of votes. |
| Countback | A method to fill an extraordinary vacancy where councillors were originally elected using the proportional representation method. |
| Early Voting Centre | A voting centre appointed by the Returning Officer to take votes prior to election day. |
| Election Official | An election official is appointed by the Returning Officer to assist the Voting Centre Manager with the conduct of the election at a voting centre. |
| Formality of Votes | An examination of ballot papers to check whether they have been marked in accordance with the Act and the Regulations. |
| Ordinary Voting | Voting by persons at voting centres in their own ward on election day or at an early voting centre prior to election day. |
| Postal Vote | Vote by a person who applies for an early vote by post. |
| Preliminary Scrutiny | The validation of envelopes containing postal, unenrolled and other declaration votes. |
| Recheck | The rechecking and recounting of first preference votes by the Returning Officer before the distribution of preferences is conducted. |
| Recount | A provision whereby the Returning Officer may, at any time before the declaration of the election, open any sealed parcel containing ballot papers and conduct a fresh count. A recount usually occurs or is requested when the result of an election is close. |
| Returning Officer | An electoral official who is responsible for the administration of the election in a municipality. |
| Scrutineer | A person appointed by a candidate to observe certain electoral procedures on the candidate's behalf at an election. |
| Scrutiny | The checking of formality and counting of ballot papers, and the validation of declaration votes by the Returning Officer. |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Silent Voter | A person whose address details are not included on the voters roll. Such a person has declared that the inclusion of his or her address details on the voters roll will place that person's or family's safety at risk. |
| Unenrolled Voter | A person who claims to be entitled to vote at an election but whose name cannot be found on the voters roll. |
| Unidentified Voter | A person who claims to be entitled to vote, but who is suspected of impersonating a voter. |
| Voters Roll | An alphabetical list of persons, certified by the Chief Executive Officer of the council, who are eligible to vote at the election or by-election. The council's CEO's list of non-resident ratepayers, representatives of corporations and other ratepayers (who have applied to be on the roll) is merged with the Electoral Commission list of State electors to create the voters roll. There is a separate roll for each ward. |
| Voting Centre | A building, structure, vehicle or enclosure at which voters can attend to record their votes. |
| Voting Centre Manager | An official appointed by the Returning Officer to be in charge of a voting centre. |

1. APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINEERS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Role | <p>Scrutineers may be appointed by candidates to observe their interests at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appointed early voting centres during the course of the early voting period; • voting centres throughout election day; and • voting centres and the Election Office during the counting of votes. |
|-------------|--|

Candidates may only appoint one scrutineer for each issuing point (i.e. issuing table) during the early voting period and on election day at each voting centre. In respect of each candidate only one scrutineer for each authorised person involved in the counting or recounting of ballot papers, or, if a computerised system of counting or recounting ballot papers is used, for each data entry person involved in the counting or recounting of ballot papers, can be present at any one time.

Scrutineers must have valid appointment forms to be admitted to any of the above activities.

A scrutineer may be removed from a voting centre by a member of the police force if the scrutineer:

- is in the counting place in contravention to the Act or Regulations; or
- obstructs or hinders an election official in the performance of any of the official's duties at the voting centre; or
- fails to obey the lawful directions of an election official.

Appointment and Declaration of Scrutineer

Before a scrutineer acts as such, he or she must make a written declaration containing the details required by the Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2005. The declaration is contained on the appointment form available from the Returning Officer.

The completed appointment form, signed by the candidate on whose behalf the scrutineer is acting, must be submitted to the appropriate election official at the venue before a scrutineer can act as such. Returning Officers will advise candidates of the proposed time for counting to commence.

A person cannot be appointed as a scrutineer if he or she is:

- a councillor of the council;
- a candidate in the election;
- a candidate in any other election for that council conducted simultaneously with that election; or
- if the council has appointed the Victorian Electoral Commission, the Australian Electoral Commission or any other council to conduct the election, a person appointed by those bodies to be involved in the conduct of the election.

Separate appointments are required for each early voting centre prior to election day, for each voting centre on election day and for the Election Office at the preliminary scrutiny of postal votes and counting of votes.

Note: Sitting councillors who are not recontesting the election will be eligible to be appointed as scrutineers, as they go out of office at 6.00am on election day.

Relieving Scrutineers

A scrutineer may enter or leave a voting centre during voting or a counting place during counting, and may be replaced during an absence by another scrutineer for the same candidate.

2. SCRUTINEERS' RIGHTS

Voting Centres

During voting on election day a scrutineer may:

- witness the exhibition and securing of the empty ballot box by the election official immediately before the commencement of voting;
- observe the questioning of voters by the election official (every voter must be asked the following three questions):
 - “What is your full name?”
 - “What address are you enrolled for in this election?”
 - “Have you voted in this election?”
- object to the right of any person to vote (the election official must record all such objections);
- observe the process for unenrolled and declaration votes including the enclosure of, and sealing in the envelopes, of the ballot papers for all such voters;
- sign any report made by an election official where a person's claim for an unenrolled or declaration vote has been refused for any reason;
- at the voter's request, observe voting by disadvantaged voters incapable of voting without assistance (a scrutineer may either enter a voting compartment to witness an election official marking the voter's ballot paper or, if asked by the voter, enter the voting compartment and mark a voter's ballot paper); and
- observe processing and parcelling of votes at the close of voting.

An ID Label will be issued to scrutineers, which is to be worn at all times whilst the scrutineer is performing their duty as a scrutineer.

Early Voting Centres

In general, all restrictions on, and rights of, scrutineers on election day apply to scrutineers at early voting centres.

At the end of each day's voting, the election official will seal the opening of the ballot box and record the seal number.

Similarly, when the ballot box is brought for the commencement of each day's voting the Early Voting Manager will exhibit the sealed ballot box to any scrutineers present to show the seal intact before removing the seal to allow ballot papers to be deposited therein.

Seal numbers are recorded on a form in the *Returning Officer's Election Diary*.

Election Office

The activities which can be scrutinised at the Election Office are the:

- inspection of postal vote applications;
- preliminary scrutiny of postal votes;
- opening and counting of postal votes;
- counting of early votes;
- scrutiny and count of unenrolled and other declaration votes;
- recheck of ballot papers;
- counting of absent votes; and
- distribution of preferences.

The different stages in the counting process are summarised in the Appendix at the end of this handbook.

The Returning Officer will provide scrutineers with an approximate timetable and location of these activities.

3. CANVASSING AT VOTING CENTRES

**Canvassing and
Distribution of
Electoral Material**

It is prohibited to canvass for votes, solicit the vote of any person, induce any person not to vote for a particular candidate, induce a person not to vote at the election or display any unofficial electoral notice within 6 metres of the entrance to the voting centre during the hours of voting.

PENALTY: 10 penalty units (\$1,134.20)

When a building used as a voting centre is situated in enclosed grounds and the Voting Centre Manager displays at each entrance a *Prohibition of Canvassing* sign, the grounds are considered to be part of the voting centre for the purposes of the above offences. In such cases, how-to-vote cards may only be distributed more than 6 metres away from the entrance to the grounds.

It is an offence to distribute unregistered how-to-vote cards or any other electoral material within 400 metres of the entrance of or within the building used as a voting centre on election day or on any day on which early voting is conducted.

**Candidates'
Helpers**

Candidates' helpers may assist voters by handing out registered how-to-vote cards.

Candidate helpers, other than those appointed as scrutineers, may only enter the voting centre to record their own vote. The only exception is when a candidate's helper is nominated by a disadvantaged voter to help that person vote.

At all other times they must remain at least 6 metres from the designated entrance to the voting centre.

4. VOTING

Types of Vote

Regardless of the number of properties a voter owns in a municipality they will only be entitled to **one** vote in the municipality.

A person may record his or her vote in a number of ways and scrutineers should be aware of the different methods. The types of vote are:

- ordinary (name marked off roll in voting centre);
- early (voter attending an early voting centre before election day);
- absent (voter attending a voting centre outside their own ward);
- postal (by application prior to election day); or
- declaration votes:
 - unenrolled - Reg 68;
 - unidentified (where a person is suspected of impersonating a voter) - Reg 66-67;
 - person who appears to have previously voted - Reg 70; or
 - voter who is known to have been issued with a postal vote and claims not to have already voted - Reg 72.

Ordinary Voting

An ordinary vote can be issued to a person found to be on the voters roll at:

- a voting centre on election day for the ward of the municipality for which he or she is enrolled; or
- an early voting centre prior to election day.

The person must state his or her full name and that he or she has not voted before at the election. If the election official is satisfied that the person is entitled to vote, a ballot paper is initialled and handed to the voter and the roll is marked.

The voter must then retire alone to a voting compartment and in private mark the vote on the ballot paper, fold it to conceal the vote, place it in the ballot box and then leave the voting centre.

(Refer to the section 'Scrutineers' Rights', for those voters who require assistance).

Early Voting

The Returning Officer will make provision for early voting at one or more early voting centres in the period prior to election day. The method of voting is the same as at a voting centre on election day.

Absent Voting

Absent voting is available to all voters who attend a voting centre outside their ward and within the boundaries of the municipality. There is no absent voting available across councils.

Postal Voting

A person may apply in writing before election day for a postal vote if he or she is enrolled or appears to be entitled to be enrolled on the voters roll.

Unenrolled Votes The Returning Officer must determine whether a voter who has been issued with an unenrolled vote is entitled to have the vote counted.

This entails referring the details of the unenrolled voter to the Chief Executive Officer of the Council or to the Electoral Commissioner to determine whether the person is entitled to be on the voters roll.

The votes which are entitled to be counted are then opened and the ballot papers extracted. They are then amalgamated and counted with the other ballot papers.

Procedures for The following procedures apply:

Issuing Unenrolled and Other Votes

- the voter must answer the questions put to an ordinary voter;
- when the election official is satisfied that the voter can be issued with a ballot paper. The voter then signs the declaration on the envelope provided for the purpose in the presence of the election official who must sign as a witness to the signature;
- on receipt of a ballot paper, a vote is marked in the normal manner; and
- the voter returns the folded ballot paper to the election official, places it in the signed and witnessed envelope, seals the envelope and places the envelope in the ballot box.

Other Votes

If there is doubt about a person's identity, then a vote can be provided if the person completes a declaration on the relevant sections of the declaration envelope.

(Reg. 66)

If a voter's name is found to have been crossed off the roll as having voted, but the voter claims not to have voted, the voter can complete a declaration and receive a new ballot paper.

(Reg. 70)

If a voter claims not to have received a postal ballot paper, the voter can complete a declaration and receive a ballot paper to complete the vote.

If a voter hands in an unused postal ballot paper, the election official cancels that ballot paper and allows the voter to cast an ordinary vote.

(Reg. 72)

5. COUNTING OF VOTES

Introduction

Scrutineers are entitled to observe all proceedings at any preliminary scrutiny or count whether conducted at a voting centre or at the Election Office.

Scrutineers may challenge the admission or rejection of voters' declarations and the formality of ballot papers. Ballot papers challenged at a voting centre must be referred to the Voting Centre Manager for decision. Ballot papers challenged at the Election Office must be referred to the Returning Officer for decision.

Counting must proceed smoothly and efficiently and scrutineers should not unnecessarily communicate with anyone at the scrutiny. Scrutineers **must not** handle ballot papers or any other election material. Scrutineers are entitled to observe all the markings on ballot papers but they must not delay proceedings except where it is necessary in the performance of their duties.

The different stages in the counting process are summarised in the Appendix at the end of this handbook.

Scrutineers will be informed of the total ballot papers to be accounted for prior to the commencement of each count.

The Returning Officer will inform scrutineers of any adjournment and advise the location and time the counting will be continued.

Ordinary Votes

At each voting centre the counting of votes begins after voting closes on election day. The ballot papers are:

- sorted to candidates according to the first preference votes marked and informal votes are set aside;
- counted and the result for the voting centre is tabulated and transmitted to the Returning Officer; and
- when the counting of the ballot papers is completed, the ballot papers are placed in sealed boxes and delivered to the Returning Officer (scrutineers may note the seal numbers on each security box).

Processing of Postal Votes

The processing of postal votes will be carried out in two stages:

- a preliminary scrutiny to ascertain that the postal vote declarations have been completed in accordance with the regulations; and
- opening and counting the ballot papers from the admitted postal votes.

The Returning Officer will have identified the voters who are on the voters roll and are entitled to vote.

The preliminary scrutiny of postal vote envelopes is usually carried out by the Returning Officer in the afternoon of election day. The Returning Officer will advise each candidate of the time and the place (generally at the Election Office) at which this will happen.

The opening and counting of postal votes will be conducted at the Election Office after close of voting on election night.

Preliminary Scrutiny of Postal Votes

After producing all postal vote applications and unopened postal vote envelopes, the Returning Officer must compare, and allow any scrutineers present to compare the voter's signature on each certificate with that on the application.

Postal vote envelopes are to be admitted to further scrutiny if the Returning Officer is satisfied that the:

- signature on the envelope is that of the voter who signed the application; and
- voter is enrolled on the voters roll.

The admittance or rejection of a postal vote is at the sole discretion of the Returning Officer and the Returning Officer's decision can only be reviewed by a Municipal Electoral Tribunal or a court of law.

Unenrolled, and other Declaration Votes

The scrutiny of unenrolled and other declaration votes is carried out in two stages:

- preliminary scrutiny of unenrolled and other declaration votes to determine whether the claimant is entitled to vote; and
- the counting of the ballot papers admitted to the count.

Absent Votes

The counting of absent votes issued at the voting centres will take place at the Election Office on Sunday morning.

Recheck

The recheck of all ballot papers from the voting centres, early voting centres, postal, absent, unenrolled and other declaration voting will take place on Sunday.

Ballot papers for each candidate will then be amalgamated before commencing the distribution of preferences.

Total Ballot Papers

Once the recheck has been completed, the Returning Officer will be able to provide scrutineers with the total number of ballot papers to be accounted for during the preference distribution.

Distribution of Preferences (Single Vacancies)

Where one councillor is to be elected for a ward, the preferential method is used to determine the result. Under the preferential method a candidate must obtain an absolute majority (more than 50% of the formal vote) to be elected.

If no candidate receives an absolute majority of first preference votes or if there is more than one candidate to be elected for a ward then the Returning Officer will conduct a preference distribution.

The Returning Officer will explain procedure as each stage progresses.

Distributing Preferences (Multiple Vacancies)

Where more than one councillor is to be elected for a ward or the whole municipality, the proportional representation method is used to determine the result. Under this method a candidate must obtain a "quota" to be elected. The quota is determined by dividing the number of formal votes by one more than the number of vacancies, then adding one.

Computers are generally used to determine the result where proportional representation applies.

The Returning Officer will provide further details.

Computer Count

When the result is to be determined using computers, the ballot papers returned from voting centres, early voting centres, postal and other declaration votes will be batched and reconciled.

The preferences shown on each ballot paper will be entered into the computer system by experienced keyboard operators. During data entry, the computer application checks each ballot paper for formality.

For a number of councils the VEC will use scanners to read the preferences on ballot papers instead of data entry.

Informal ballot papers are identified and removed from each batch. Only formal ballot papers are saved to the database. When the entry of all ballot papers has been accounted for, the computer system will be activated and the results calculated.

Scrutineers are entitled to observe all aspects of this procedure.

Two reports will be available to scrutineers for computer counts:

- progressive 1st preference results reports during data entry; and
- batch details reports —on request, scrutineers may ask that a batch details report is printed for a particular batch so that they may compare the preferences recorded on the computer for that batch against the actual ballot papers.

6. COUNTING TIMETABLE

The VEC has established a counting timetable to ensure that reconciliations can be completed before the commencement of each stage in the count process. In establishing the timetable, the VEC has allowed for events that cannot be predicted prior to election weekend. For example, in situations where the count is close, the greater attention by scrutineers may slow down the count and the conduct of any recounts can delay the final declaration.

The VEC has also been concerned with occupational health and safety issues in relation to staff working very long hours to meet pre-determined declaration times, and has included these considerations into the development of the count timetable. Simply increasing the number of election officials does not guarantee a better or quicker outcome.

Every effort will be made to complete all counts as quickly as is reasonably possible, but the VEC can only guarantee that all elections will be declared by Friday 5 December —five working days after election day. Whilst the process may take longer in the short term, it will pay dividends in the long term.

Further details of count timetables will be available once nominations have closed and the number of candidates is known. However, close elections and where recounts will be required will still be unknown.

The counting activities commencing on Saturday 29 November, including key reconciliation points during the counting process, are summarised in the Appendix.

7. RECOUNT OF VOTES

At any time before a candidate has been declared elected, the Returning Officer may;

- if he or she thinks fit; or
- at the written request of the candidate specifying reasons, open any sealed parcel containing ballot papers and recount the ballot papers.

The following applies to recounts:

- a recount may be conducted at the discretion of the Returning Officer;
- the Returning Officer may conduct one or more recounts; and
- the Returning Officer must make reasonable efforts to notify candidates or their representatives before a recount is conducted.

In respect of each candidate only one scrutineer for each authorised person involved in the recounting of ballot papers can be present at any one time. A candidate is not entitled to be present at the recount.

8. OFFENCES

Offences by Scrutineers

During voting a scrutineer must not:

- interfere with or attempt to influence any voter within the voting centre; or
- communicate with any person in the voting centre except so far as is necessary to fulfil the duties of a scrutineer.

A scrutineer who commits such a breach, or engages in misconduct or who fails to obey the lawful directions of the Returning Officer, Voting Centre Manager or other election official may be removed from the voting centre by the police or a person authorised by the Returning Officer or election official.

Other Offences

Scrutineers, candidate helpers and supporters of candidates should also be aware that it is an offence on election day or on any day on which early voting is conducted to distribute any unregistered how-to-vote card within 400 metres of the entrance of a voting centre.

PENALTY: 10 penalty units (\$1,134.20)

For anyone to hinder or interfere with the free exercise or performance by any other person of any political right or duty that is relevant to an election.

PENALTY: 1 penalty unit (\$113.42)

For anyone during the hours of voting at an election to make any public demonstration having any reference to the election or to use a loud speaker or device for broadcasting or disseminating any matter intended or likely to affect the result of the election.

PENALTY: 1 penalty unit (\$113.42)

8. Offences

To vote or attempt to vote more than once at any election or by-election, to impersonate any voter or to remove a ballot paper from a ballot box. PENALTY: imprisonment for 6 months

To remove a ballot paper from a voting centre.
PENALTY: 1 penalty unit (\$113.42)

For any person to fraudulently tamper with ballot material.
PENALTY: Various ranging from 10 penalty units (\$1,134.20) to imprisonment for 6 months.

Offences relating to the infringement of the secrecy of the ballot.
PENALTY: imprisonment for 6 months

A person who is required to make a written declaration by or under this Act or the regulations as a candidate, scrutineer or voter or as a person submitting a how-to-vote card must not knowingly make a declaration which is false.
PENALTY: 20 penalty units (\$2,268.40)

9. FORMALITY OF VOTES

A Guide to Ballot Paper Formality

- Each ballot paper must have a number 1 in, or adjacent to, or level with one box.
- All boxes should be numbered using the full sequence of numbers as indicated on the ballot paper. The only exception is where one box is left blank and would logically have contained the last preference, i.e. with 6 candidates, the number 6 may be omitted.
- More than one box left blank makes the vote informal.
- Any duplication or omission of a number from the sequence makes the vote informal.
- Numbers next to, or on the other side of the names, are acceptable providing the voter's intention is clear.
- Amendments are acceptable providing the voter's intention is clear. All other marks are to be ignored.
- The number '0' (zero) makes the vote informal.

Examples

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 2 | Candidate 1 |
| ✓ | Candidate 2 |
| 3 | Candidate 3 |
| 4 | Candidate 4 |
| 5 | Candidate 5 |

Informal: No number 1

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| X | Candidate 1 |
| X | Candidate 2 |
| X | Candidate 3 |
| 1 | Candidate 4 |
| X | Candidate 5 |

Informal: Does not have sequence of numbers after 1

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 2 | Candidate 1 |
| | Candidate 2 |
| 3 | Candidate 3 |
| 1 | Candidate 4 |
| 3 | Candidate 5 |

Informal: The number three appears twice

9. Formality of Votes

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1✓ | Candidate 1 |
| 2 | Candidate 2 |
| 3 | Candidate 3 |
| 4 | Candidate 4 |
| 5 | Candidate 5 |

Formal: Even though there is a tick, the number 1 is clear

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 40 | Candidate 1 |
| 50 | Candidate 2 |
| 1 | Candidate 3 |
| 2 | Candidate 4 |
| 70 | Candidate 5 |

Informal: Numbers not consecutive

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 1 | Candidate 1 |
| | Candidate 2 |
| 2 | Candidate 3 |
| | Candidate 4 |
| 3 | Candidate 5 |

Informal: More than one square has been left blank

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 3 | Candidate 1 |
| 1 | Candidate 2 |
| 2 | Candidate 3 |
| 5 | Candidate 4 |
| 4 | Candidate 5 |

Formal: Numbers are consecutive

| | | |
|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Candidate 1 | |
| 4 | 2 | Candidate 2 |
| 3 | Candidate 3 | |
| 2 | 4 | Candidate 4 |
| 5 | Candidate 5 | |

Formal: Even though crossed out, the re-numbering is clear

| | | |
|----------|--|-------------|
| 2 | | Candidate 1 |
| 3 | | Candidate 2 |
| 1 | | Candidate 3 |
| 4 | | Candidate 4 |
| 5 | | Candidate 5 |

Formal: Numbers outside boxes, but clearly allocated

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 4 | Candidate 1 |
| 1 | Candidate 2 |
| 2 | Candidate 3 |
| | Candidate 4 |
| 3 | Candidate 5 |

Formal: Only one box left blank, clearly last preference

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 3 | Candidate 1 |
| 1 | Candidate 2 |
| 2 | Candidate 3 |
| 5 | Candidate 4 |
| | Candidate 5 |

Informal: Sequence has been discontinued between 3 and 5 (i.e. no number 4)

| | |
|----------|-------------|
| 4 | Candidate 1 |
| 3 | Candidate 2 |
| 2 | Candidate 3 |
| 1 | Candidate 4 |
| 0 | Candidate 5 |


Informal: The number must be 1, 2, 3, and so on. Zero ("0") is not permitted.

APPENDIX – COUNTING TIMETABLE

| Date/Time | Activity |
|--|--|
| Saturday 29 November —after 8.00am | <p>Preliminary Scrutiny – postal vote declarations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The preliminary scrutiny of returned postal vote declarations involves checking signatures on postal vote applications against the returned declarations. This activity will take place in the Election Office on Saturday 29 November at a time to be advised by the Returning Officer. |
| Saturday 29 November —from 6.00pm | <p>Postal and early vote counts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening and counting to first preferences of postal votes will be conducted in the Election Office from 6.00pm on election day. Early votes will also be counted at the Election Office after 6.00pm on election day. |
| Saturday 29 November —from 6.00pm | <p>Ordinary vote counts – voting centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordinary votes issued in voting centres on election day will be counted to first preferences in each voting centre after 6.00pm on election night. Each voting centre will reconcile the number of votes issued against the number counted. Results will be phoned through to the Election Office and recorded by the Returning Officer. Interim result reports will be available on request from the Returning Officer once counting is completed on election night. |
| Sunday 30 November —morning | <p>Absent vote counts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Votes issued to voters attending voting centres on election day outside the ward for which they are enrolled, will be sorted and counted to first preferences in the Election Office on Sunday morning. |
| Sunday 30 November —morning | <p>Unenrolled declaration checking and counting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Checks to see if voters who completed an unenrolled declaration were eligible to have their vote included in the count, will be carried out by council and VEC staff on Sunday morning in the Election Office. Once checking is complete, those declarations to be included in the count will be opened, ballot papers extracted, and counted to first preferences. |
| Sunday 30 November | <p>Check if further counting is required</p> <p>Single vacancies -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once all ballot papers have been counted to first preferences, the Returning Officer will check to see if any candidate has an absolute majority. If not, a preference distribution will be required. <p>Multiple vacancies –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once all ballot papers have been counted to first preferences, the Returning Officer will calculate the quota and check to see if any candidates have achieved a quota. If unfilled vacancies remain, a proportional representation count will be conducted by computer. |

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| Sunday 30 November | <p>Recheck of all ballot papers (Single vacancies where preference distribution is required)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full recheck of ballot papers from voting centres, early voting centres, postal, absent, unenrolled and other declaration votes will take place in the Election Office from Sunday morning. The recheck involves checking that ballot papers have been correctly sorted and counted prior to the conduct of a preference distribution. • Once the recheck is complete, ballot papers for each candidate are amalgamated and the Returning Officer will be able to provide scrutineers with the total number of ballot papers to be accounted for in the preference distribution. |
| Will commence no earlier than Sunday afternoon but more likely to be Monday 1 December. | <p>Preference distribution (Single vacancies - if required)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where no candidate receives an absolute majority of first preference votes, preference distributions will take place to determine the successful candidate. • All totals will be reconciled at each stage of the preference distribution. |
| Will commence no earlier than Sunday afternoon. | <p>Check-count and batching (Multiple vacancies - computer counts)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a computer count is being conducted, ballot papers from each voting centre, early, postal and other declaration parcels will be checked for correct counting of ballot papers and then batched in preparation for computer counting. Batch cover slips will be attached. • The total ballot papers after batching will be reconciled against the balance figure for each ward. • Once reconciled, ballot paper batches will be secured and transported to the computer count venue. |
| Computer counts will mostly extend from Monday 1 December onwards. | <p>Computer counts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data entry (or scanning for selected councils) will commence as soon as practicable after batching is complete. • The election result for each ward will be calculated once data entry and all reconciliations are complete for that ward. |
| | <p>Recounts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At any time before the declaration of the result, a recount may be conducted. Candidates may request a recount or they may be initiated by the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer will conduct a recount on request by a candidate if the Returning Officer is satisfied that the reasons provided by the candidate may have affected the election result. • A recount involves repeating all steps in the count, and the result of the recount supersedes the original count. |
| Between Monday 1 December and Friday 5 December. | <p>Declaration of results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Returning Officer will publicly declare the result of the election at a designated time and place after the completion of all counting. • Candidates will be notified of the declaration date, time and venue. |

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