

**Scottish Parliamentary Election  
Thursday 6 May 2021**

**Midlothian North & Musselburgh  
Constituency**



## **Administrative Arrangements for Candidates & Agents**

### **1 The Constituency Returning Officer and the Election Office**

The Constituency Returning Officer (CRO) is Dr Grace Vickers, however, the day to day running of the By-Election will be carried out by Gill Smith, Elections Officer (and Depute Constituency Returning Officer (DCRO)) and Alan Turpie, Legal Services Manager (and DCRO).

The Election will be administered from the **Election Office, Midlothian Council, Midlothian House, 40-46 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN.**

Telephone No - 0131 271 3365  
Public Helpline No – 0131 271 3384  
Email - [elections@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:elections@midlothian.gov.uk)  
Web - [www.midlothian.gov.uk/election](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/election)

The office is open on weekdays from 10.00am to 4.00pm excluding Saturdays and Sundays. Outwith the nomination period the office is open as above except on Fridays when the office closes at 3.30 pm.

Additionally, the office will be open on the day of the poll (Thursday 6 May 2021) from 7.00am to 10.00pm.

Please note that reception facilities at Midlothian House are closed whilst the Coronavirus (COVID 19) restrictions are in place. Accordingly, if you wish to meet either the CRO or one of her DCRO's (Gill Smith/Alan Turpie) you are advised to telephone or e-mail in advance. Please note these meetings, if possible, will be held remotely.

### **2 Coronavirus (COVID 19) Safeguards**

The Electoral Commission has developed a set of election objectives with the UK's governments, political parties and electoral administrators, to ensure the elections can be delivered safely and successfully. This has been done with the input of all political parties and governing bodies. The assessment of risk in relation to the coronavirus pandemic is an ongoing process and the position will be kept under review in accordance with the latest national and local guidance in relation to Covid-19 restrictions and public health guidance. Arrangements will be in place to help ensure polling stations meet strict health and safety standards for those who wish to vote in person.

Risk/...

Risk assessments will be completed to determine what measures need to be in place at polling stations. All measures will be in accordance with the most up to date public health guidance and in keeping with any national or local Covid-19 restrictions that are in force on the day of the by-election. Voters can expect many of the measures they've become used to over recent months, such as the use of hand sanitiser, floor markings and face coverings. Arrangements will be communicated in advance of the polling date of Thursday 6 May.

Should the CRO (or a Depute) become concerned that an activity is not being carried out in a way compliant with public health, that activity will be suspended until the situation is resolved.

### **3 Electoral Registration Officer**

Enquiries relating to (a) entitlement to vote by post/proxy and (b) the register of electors should be addressed to the Electoral Registration Officer, Lothian Valuation Joint Board, 17A South Gyle Crescent, Edinburgh, EH12 9FL.

Telephone No - 0131 344 2500

Email – [enquiries@lothian-vjb.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@lothian-vjb.gov.uk)

Web - [www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk](http://www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk)

### **4 Delivery of Nomination Papers under Coronavirus Conditions**

The CRO has planned how best to conduct the nominations process according to the rules, ensuring that physical distancing is maintained between CRO staff and candidates/agents and that essential hygiene measures are followed.

An informal check of nomination papers is available prior to formal submission. To minimise in-person visits, this will be done electronically. You should scan and email your papers to [Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk) as an electronic alternative to face to face checks. Please ensure this is done well in advance of the closing deadline of **Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 4pm**.

Submission of the Nomination Form itself **must be made in person**. It is requested that only one person – for example the Candidate OR the Agent – attends the submission of nominations. (Please note that the Nomination Form must be submitted in person but that this person does not **have** to be the Candidate or Agent). We will ensure that physical distancing and essential hygiene measures are in place. Please sanitise your hands on entry and exit and you are requested to wear a face covering. You will be asked to provide your contact details for the purposes of contact tracing if required.

While nomination papers must be submitted in person, other papers can be submitted by hand or by post but not by electronic means. Please refer to the Electoral Commission guidance for additional detail.

Appointment of Polling and Count Agents forms are within the Nomination Pack and are the **only** forms which may be submitted by e-mail if wished.

Delivery/...

Delivery of nomination papers may be made by hand to the election office from **Tuesday 16 March 2021 until Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 4.00pm**. By law, the Returning Officer cannot accept any form submitted after the deadline of **4.00pm on Wednesday 31 March 2021**.

Due to Covid Restrictions the reception desk at Midlothian House is closed and therefore you are asked to make an appointment to lodge your nominations papers by telephoning 0131 271 3365 or emailing [Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk) to arrange a suitable time. This can be between 10am and 4pm.

While in practice most people submitting nomination papers will want to wait until the Returning Officer's team has accepted the nomination, you are free to simply hand over your paperwork and leave.

## **5 Candidates' Deposits**

With regard to candidate' deposits, the CRO will accept payment (£500.00) in sterling either by electronic payment, debit or credit card, in cash, or alternatively by a banker's draft or certified cheque provided she is satisfied that the drawer carries on business as a banker in the United Kingdom. Drafts and cheques should be made payable to "Midlothian Council".

**Electronic Payment of the deposit by BACS or CHAPS must arrive in the Council's Bank Account by Wednesday 31 March 2021.** Payments are only allowed with the consent of the CRO and her pre-authorisation is required before the transaction is made. In addition the name and address of the person making the payment must be given to her. Payments should be made to:

*Midlothian Council  
Royal Bank of Scotland  
63 High Street  
Dalkeith  
Midlothian  
EH22 1JA*

*Sort Code 83 17 26  
Account No. 00128363  
Account Name - General Fund Account  
Please also use the reference – "Election Deposit + your surname" -  
eg – "Election Deposit – Smith"*

**Debit and Credit Cards** – Payment must be made as part of the process of the delivery of nomination papers and not later than **4.00pm** on the day before nominations close - **ie not later than Tuesday 30 March 2021**.

## **6 Briefing for Candidates and their Election Agents**

The members of the Election Team will be available for 'one to one' briefings with Candidates/Election Agents throughout the election process and particularly when nomination papers are being uplifted and deposited but please note that we strongly advise that this is by appointment.

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A Covid briefing by the CRO and Public Health colleagues will be held for Candidates and Agents at a date to be determined. This will be notified to you by email in due course.

The CRO shall also hold a short briefing meeting regarding the Count process by MS Teams and this will be held on Thursday 6 May 2021 at 4pm. If you wish to attend this briefing please advise the DCRO by either telephoning on 0131 271 3365 or emailing [Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:Gillian.smith@midlothian.gov.uk) and an invite shall be sent to you.

## **7 Notice of Election, Notice of Poll, etc**

Enclosed in the Nomination Pack, for information, is a copy of the formal Notice of Election and a copy of the 'Scheme of Polling Arrangements on Polling Day' which indicates the current eligible electorate to vote by post or in person at a polling station.

The '*Notice of Poll/Statement of Persons Nominated*' (which will include at Part 2 the "*Situation of Polling Stations and Descriptions of Voters Entitled to Vote therein*") will be forwarded to Election Agents following the close of nominations.

### **Midlothian North and Musselburgh Constituency Area**

A map showing the whole constituency area and also maps showing the relevant Midlothian Council and East Lothian Council electoral wards (and part wards) that comprise it are enclosed in the Nomination Pack and are also available on the Council's web site at:

[www.midlothian.gov.uk/election](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/election)

## **8 Campaign Posters**

Please be aware that Midlothian Council has a Policy of not permitting the attachment of Posters to Council owned Street Lighting Columns and Street Furniture, etc

East Lothian Council has a similar policy of not permitting the attachment of Posters to Council owned Street Lighting Columns and Street Furniture, etc

The Council will, if necessary, remove offending items displayed on its non-domestic property.

In addition, Transport Scotland has advised that the display of advertisements on Trunk Roads is not permitted.

*Please consult the 'Notes for Candidates and Agents on Polling Procedures' a copy of which is in the Nomination Pack and is also issued with polling agent cards and which sets the rules for displaying political posters outside polling places on polling day and also for wearing rosettes (in the Polling Place, but not the polling station).*

## **9/...**

## 9 Notice of the Opening of Postal Ballot Boxes and Envelopes

All the postal vote application signatures and dates of births in the postal vote statements in the returned postal ballot packs will be electronically verified.

Formal notice of the opening of the postal ballot boxes and postal ballot paper envelopes and the verification of postal voter identifiers has been issued separately in the Nomination Pack. It also gives details regarding the appointment of agent(s) to attend the postal openings. The openings will be held in the Council Chambers, Midlothian House, 40-46 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN.

***Note: Ballot Papers are not being adjudicated or counted by candidate at the postal pack openings.***

As we do not have reception facilities at any of the Council buildings whilst the Coronavirus (Covid 19) Restrictions are in place, we cannot unfortunately offer the convenience of a ballot box being placed in Midlothian House reception for receiving postal votes. However, postal vote packs may be deposited in the secure external mail box situated at the front of Midlothian House until close of poll at 10pm on 6 May 2021. Any packs deposited after that time will not be treated as having been received timeously.

## 10 Appointment of Polling and Counting Agents

The appointment of Polling and Counting Agents may be made by the Candidate or the Election Agent.

Notice of the appointments requires to be given to the CRO in writing, stating the names and addresses of the persons appointed and can be submitted in hard copy or by email to [elections@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:elections@midlothian.gov.uk). (For convenience the relevant forms which you may wish to use to make the various appointments are enclosed in the Nomination Pack and are also available for download on the Council's Election website at [www.midlothian.gov.uk/election](http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/election))

There is no restriction on the number of polling agents to be appointed but not more than one polling agent may be admitted at the same time to a polling station on behalf of the same candidate.

In regard to Counting Agents the number to be allowed for each Candidate will be determined after the close of nominations when the number of candidates is known. In addition, each Candidate is entitled to nominate one person as his/her guest to attend the Count but that person has no legal status in the proceedings.

The name and address of the guest should be entered on the Counting Agent form.

Notice of appointments must be given to the Returning Officer **not later than Wednesday 28 April 2021** – if necessary this can be done by email.

**Polling/...**

### **Polling Agent Guidance – Covid Safety**

- Polling Agents will be encouraged to wear face coverings where possible upon entry to polling places;
- Consider suitable distancing for polling agents, campaigners and tellers around polling place entrances, queueing areas and exits;
- Consider infection risks in handing voters information leaflets etc and the implications of such items being taken into the polling place;
- Information Officers will be sited at each polling place to manage the flow of electors and will monitor positioning of polling agents to ensure safety for all.

### **Count Attendance – Covid Safety**

- Our aim is to maximise transparency of count processes without compromising safety;
- Face coverings will be required to be worn (unless exempt);
- Additional hygiene measures will be in place;
- The layout of the Count hall will allow scrutiny and observation of the processes wherever possible but will also be such as to allow physical distancing;
- The number of Count Agents will be minimised – the number allowed per candidate will be confirmed in due course;
- We will collect names and addresses of those in attendance for contact tracing purposes, if required.

## **11 Poll and Count Admission Cards**

In regard to the poll and count admission cards, please state on the appropriate forms a contact name and telephone number of who will be available to collect the cards from the Election Office at Midlothian House, 40-46, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN. **This must be done by appointment.**

## **12 Close of Poll and Security of Ballot Boxes Overnight**

**The Poll closes at 10 pm on Thursday 6 May 2021** after which the ballot boxes are sealed and taken by polling staff, along with the relevant election stationery boxes, etc, to The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg.

The ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts, election stationery box, etc will be logged in at The Lasswade Centre and then placed in a secure room.

When the CRO is satisfied that all is in order, the secure room will be locked and sealed in the presence of the Police and a security presence will be on duty until the room is unlocked on the morning of 7 May 2021.

**At 9.00am on Friday 7 May 2021** the door seals of the secure room will be checked to ensure they are still intact and, if so, recorded in the presence of the Police. Thereafter the room will be unlocked and opened and the Ballot Boxes transferred to the Count Hall in The Lasswade Centre.

***Candidates and their Election Agents are invited to observe any of the above events taking place.***

**13/...**

### **13 The Count**

The verification and subsequent counting of ballot papers will commence at 10.00am, Friday 7 May 2021 at The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg.

**Please note that due to social distancing measures the number of enumerators has been significantly reduced which will impact on the time taken to verify and count the ballot papers. Therefore, it is likely that the Count will be adjourned on Friday 7 May then re-started on Saturday 8 May. At 5.00pm on Friday 7 May the CRO will review the progress of the Count and determine when counting will cease on that day and whether counting will be required on Saturday 8 May. If necessary, counting will commence at 10am on Saturday 8 May.**

Count Accreditation Cards will be issued with the Midlothian Council 'Count Booklet' which will contain full details of the count method, count rules, venue facilities, Covid Secure guidance, 'on the day' electorate by polling station, etc.

### **14 Election Integrity**

Each Constituency has a local Police 'SPOC' (Single Point of Contact) Officer allocated to it to provide election support and to be the first point of contact in regard to any election integrity issues likely to result in possible legal proceedings.

For the Midlothian North and Musselburgh Constituency the contact is Inspector Jim Robertson – telephone 0131 654 5548 – who is available to advise and assist both the CRO and Candidates and Agents in integrity matters to ensure a fair and transparent election.

**Dr Grace Vickers  
Constituency Returning Officer**

**15 March 2021**

***If you wish clarification of any point in regard to the Scottish Parliamentary Election for the Midlothian North and Musselburgh County Constituency please do not hesitate to contact either the Constituency Returning Officer or her Depute (0131 271 3365).***