

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

1 The Returning Officer and the Election Office

The Returning Officer (RO) is Dr Grace Vickers, however, the day to day running of the Election will be carried out by Gill Smith, Elections Officer (and Depute Returning Officer (DRO)) and Alan Turpie, Legal Services Manager (and DRO). The Election will be administered from the **Election Office, Midlothian Council, Midlothian House, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN.**

Telephone No - 0131 271 3365
Public Helpline No – 0131 271 3384
Email - elections@midlothian.gov.uk
Web - 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 3.30pm. Additionally, the office will be open on the day of the poll (Thursday 5 May 2022) from 7.00am to 10.00pm. If you wish to meet either the Returning Officer or one of her Depute Returning Officers, you are advised to telephone in advance.

2 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
Web - www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk

3 Delivery of Nomination Papers

An informal check of nomination papers is recommended 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 as an electronic alternative to face to face checks. Please ensure this is done well in advance of the closing deadline of **Wednesday 30 March 2022 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).

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While nomination papers must be submitted in person, other papers can be submitted by hand or by post but only the Appointment of Polling and Count Agents forms may be submitted by electronic means. Please refer to the Electoral Commission guidance for additional detail.

Delivery of nomination papers may be made by hand to the election office from **Tuesday 15 March 2022** until **Wednesday 30 March 2022 at 4.00pm**. By law, the Returning Officer cannot accept any form submitted after the deadline of **4.00pm on Wednesday 30 March 2022**.

You may wish to make an appointment to lodge your nominations papers by telephoning 0131 271 3365 or emailing 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.

4 Briefing for Candidates and their Election Agents

Whilst a 'Briefing Meeting' for Candidates and their Election Agents was held on 9 March 2022, the members of the Election Team are available for 'one to one' briefings with Candidates/Election Agents, particularly, when nomination papers are being uplifted and deposited.

In addition, there will also be a 'Briefing Meeting' for Candidates and their Election Agents and a demonstration of the eCounting system at the Count Hall in The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, EH19 2LA on Wednesday 4 May 2022 and details will follow in due course.

5 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 (30 March 2022 at 4pm).

6 Statutory Provisions Re Use of School Rooms and Meeting Rooms for Election Meetings

A copy of the provisions and the statutory list of rooms available for meetings is contained in the Nomination Pack.

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

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 and around the Polling Place and polling stations.

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

8 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.

A ballot box will be available at the Reception Desk in Midlothian House, 40-46 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN, from 16 April 2022 until the close of poll, for receiving any postal votes which are handed in. In addition, on Polling Day, postal votes can also be handed in until the 10pm poll deadline at any polling station in the Midlothian Council local government area.

On Polling Day, the opening and verification of postal ballot packs will commence at 10am in The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian EH19 2LA - this will continue throughout Polling Day until the postal votes are all processed, with verification taking place on an ongoing basis.

9 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 Returning Officer 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. (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.)

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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 permitted participant.

In regard to Counting Agents the number to be allowed for each Candidate is 2. 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 must be entered on the counting agent form.

Notice of appointments must be given to the Returning Officer **not later than Wednesday 27 April 2022** – if necessary this can be done by email.

10 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 who will be available to collect the cards from the Election Office at Midlothian House, 40-46, Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1DN.

11 Close of Poll and Security of Ballot Boxes Overnight

The Poll closes at 10pm on Thursday 5 May 2022 after which the ballot boxes will be sealed and taken by polling staff, along with the relevant election stationery box etc, to The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, EH19 2LA.

The ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts, election stationery box, etc will be logged into the Centre and placed in a secure room. The ballot paper accounts will be informally checked and any significant discrepancy in an account is likely to require the unused ballot papers and other items in the relevant election stationery box to be scrutinised to try and resolve the discrepancy.

When the Returning Officer is satisfied that all is in order, the secure room will be locked and sealed in the presence of witnesses, which will include the Police. The secure room will then be guarded overnight.

At 7.50am on Friday 6 May 2022 the door seals of the secure room will be checked to ensure they are still intact and, if so, recorded in the presence of witnesses, which will include the Police. Thereafter the room will be unlocked and opened ready for the Count to commence.

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

12 The Count

The Count will be held at The Lasswade Centre, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian, EH19 2LA commencing at **9.15am on Friday 6 May 2022**.

However, Candidates and their Election Agents should note that they are invited to observe the following which takes place prior to the Count:

- The verification of the unused ballot papers which will begin at **8am**.

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- The '*Cleardown*' of the e-count system which will commence at **8.10am**.

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, 'on the day' electorate by polling station, etc.

**Dr Grace Vickers
Returning Officer
4 March 2022**

If you wish clarification of any point in regard to the Midlothian Council Elections please do not hesitate to contact either the Returning Officer or one of her Deputes (0131 271 3365).