

Local Government Election – South Ayrshire Council

Thursday 4 May 2017

Arrangements at the Poll

At this election the following arrangements will apply:

(1) Entitlement to Attend the Polling Station

The following people are entitled to attend the poll:

- voters;
- candidates;
- election agents;
- polling agents;
- Returning Officer and members of the Returning Officer's staff;
- police officers and community support officers on duty at the polling station;
- representatives of the Electoral Commission;
- accredited observers;
- persons under the age of 16 accompanying voters; and
- companions of voters with disabilities.

Those attending (other than voters and their specified companions) must hold the appropriate admission pass from the Returning Officer or the Electoral Commission.

(2) Polling Agents

Polling agents have the right to enter and to remain in the polling station and to observe voting procedures. The main purpose of their appointment is to detect personation – that is, people voting illegally in the name of another voter.

Polling agents may attend at the polling station(s) for which they have been appointed. Only one polling agent from each candidate is allowed to enter the polling station at any time. Those attending must have received notification, in writing, of the requirement of secrecy, and must hold the appropriate admission pass, otherwise admission to the polling station will not be allowed.

The main duties and responsibilities of polling agents on polling day are:

- to observe the presiding officer showing the empty ballot box prior to sealing;
- to detect personation and prevent people from voting more than once at the same election;
- to report to their election agent any improper occurrences;
- to be present when the presiding officer marks ballot papers at the request of electors;
- to be present at the close of poll when the various packets of documents are sealed; and
- to maintain the secrecy of the ballot.

However, just because a polling agent is entitled to witness various aspects of the polling procedure, the procedure is not invalidated if they have not witnessed it.

Polling agents must not interfere with the voting process and must not campaign or canvass voters in the polling station. Any rosette or badge worn by a polling agent should be plain but may display the name of a candidate, party and/ or emblem.

An election agent can also do any of the things that a polling agent is authorised to do.

(3) Display of Campaign Material

No campaign material shall be displayed inside the boundary of any polling place or affixed to the perimeter wall or railing surrounding the premises. (A polling place comprises the buildings in which the polling stations are situated, and includes the boundary of the property at which these buildings are located and the immediate vicinity of the boundary gates.)

Since 1 July 2010, the display of campaign material on any Council property in South Ayrshire, including lighting columns, traffic sign poles and street furniture, has been prohibited. Candidates and agents should ensure that all election campaign material, including any bills, placards and posters, complies with this requirement. Materials breaching this will be removed by the Council as a priority in line with agreed practice.

Please also remember that no advertisement or campaign material should be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site or anyone else with an interest in the site.

Should the Council require to remove campaign material a levy of £30 per hour will be charged to the political party or candidate at fault.

(4) Campaigning on Polling Day

Presiding officers must ensure that electors can quietly and privately cast their vote free of any intimidation and provide a space where the secrecy of the ballot will be respected. Electors should be able to enter the polling place (as defined above) in the same manner. **Campaigning is not permitted within a polling station or at a polling place.**

(5) Tellers

Candidates may appoint tellers to act on their behalf at the poll. Tellers are volunteers for candidates who stand outside polling places and record the electoral numbers of voters who have voted. They can play a useful role by identifying electors who have not yet voted and by relaying this information to the candidates or their supporters. The candidates, in turn, can then try to persuade the people who have not yet voted to go to the poll, which may help to increase turnout. Tellers may approach voters for information as they enter or leave the polling place.

Tellers have no legal status and are not allowed to enter the polling place or station, unless to record their own vote or vote as proxy for an elector. Voters have the right to refuse to give them any information

General guidance for tellers is that they should **not**;

- be allowed in or near the room for voting. They must not be allowed to hear what is going on in the room;
- obstruct voters' access to the polling station;
- canvass or campaign;

- ask voters to re-enter the polling station to request their poll card or to ascertain their electoral number. While voters are entitled to take their poll card away with them, it will be destroyed should they choose to leave it behind in the polling station;
- be aggressive;
- park cars emblazoned with the name of their candidate or political party within the polling place; and/ or
- distribute any political material or propaganda within the polling place.

Contravention of any of these guidelines may result in the teller being asked to leave the polling place. They have no right to be any closer than the public road.

(6) Rosettes

Tellers may wear a coloured rosette as this assists electors by making it clear that they are campaign workers and not electoral officials. While the rosette must not be oversized nor bear a slogan, it may carry a description or emblem.

Any rosette or badge worn by a polling agent within a polling station should be plain but may display the name of a candidate, party and/ or emblem.

There will, however, be no restriction on the wearing of rosettes or other means of political party identification within a polling place by:

- (a) an election agent or polling agent making a brief visit to a polling place; or
- (b) any person entering a polling place for the purposes of:
 - voting personally; or
 - assisting another voter to vote where permitted so to do by law.

(7) Cars

Long-term parking of vehicles used for campaign purposes (for example, displaying election materials or using loudspeakers) is not permitted:

- within car parks within polling places;
- immediately outside the entrances to polling places; or
- within a reasonable distance of the entrances to polling places.

Cars being used in campaigns that are also being used to transport voters may need to wait for the voter while they visit the polling station, but this should not be unduly prolonged.

(8) Disabled Voters

Disabled voters may request the assistance of the presiding officer to mark the ballot paper for them. Presiding officers should pay particular attention to disabled voters and should familiarise themselves with the arrangements for disabled access.

Alternatively, disabled voters may be assisted by a companion, with the permission of the presiding officer who must be satisfied that the voter's disabilities would prevent them from casting their vote unaided.

The companion of a disabled voter must be either a close relative (spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild – if they are aged 18 years or over) or a person entitled to vote.

(9) Signs and Notices

The presiding officer will ensure that appropriate signs and notices are in place to provide information for voters. The following notices will be in place:

- 'Information for Voters' will be displayed in the polling booth. 'Guidance for Voters' will be displayed around the polling station.
- A large sample copy of the ballot paper will be displayed inside the polling station and an enlarged hand-held copy marked 'sample' will also be available in the polling station.
- A 'No Photography or Filming' notice.

No posters or other material that might be construed as supporting the views of any political party involved in the election shall be permitted to be displayed in or on the polling place. If any such materials are found, they shall be removed or covered up.

(10) Voting Information provided by Presiding Officer to Agents

No-one is entitled to be informed of the numbers of persons who have voted. However, it will be permissible for presiding officers **who wish to do so** to give election agents and polling agents a note of the **actual number** of persons who have voted from time to time throughout the day.

Information as to whether or not a particular person has or has not voted shall **not** be given although such information may be relevant for consideration in a case where an agent has raised a question of personation.

The presiding officer shall ensure that meeting these requests does not interfere with his/ her official duties.

(11) Photography/ Film

It is not permissible to take photographs or film inside the polling station except by accredited photographers.

Notices will be displayed to this effect within the polling station and each polling booth.

Further Information and Assistance/ Queries

Any matters relating to the conduct of the poll or the count should be referred to the Depute Returning Officer - Valerie Andrews (01292 61300) - in the first instance.

Printed and Published by the Returning Officer, County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr