

GLRO Directions

Mayor of London and London Assembly elections on 6 May 2021

Greater London Returning Officer's (GLRO's) directions to Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) under Rule 11 of the Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2007 (as amended)

Should a CRO intend to deviate from any of these directions they should provide written notice with their reasons to the GLRO as soon as this becomes apparent.

Most important: Revised direction 10 on count start times; and new direction 11 included on the requirement for a sample manual count to take place in each Constituency.

Summary of Directions to CROs

1	Compliance with legislation, Electoral Commission (EC) Guidance, and EC Performance Standards required	CROs to coordinate the poll in line with legislation, the EC Guidance and to the required EC Performance Standards.
2	Key plans and documents to be made available on request	In line with EC Guidance and Performance Standards, CROs shall have in place not only detailed project plans, but other required documents including risk registers, integrity plans and security plans. These documents are to be made available to the GLRO on request.
3	Poll cards to include specified information about the mayoral election address booklet	CROs shall secure that information about the mayoral election address booklet is included on all poll cards, using the exact wording supplied by the GLRO below.
4	Delivery of poll cards (bulk run) to be completed no later than 8th April 2021	CROs shall secure the delivery of poll cards (bulk run) by no later than 8th April 2021 to allow any elector who cannot vote in person on polling day to be able to apply for a postal or proxy vote.
5	Only postal vote packs specified by GLRO to be used	CROs shall secure that only postal vote packs as specified by the GLRO directly with all postal vote pack printers are used.

6	Issue of postal votes to start no earlier than 14th April 2021 and as soon after that as reasonably practicable	CROs shall secure the issue of postal votes no earlier than 14th April 2021 and as soon after that as reasonably practicable to allow all postal voters to receive the mayoral election address booklet before casting their votes.
7	All polling station staff to complete the on-line training programme provided by the GLRO	CROs shall secure that all persons to be appointed as polling station staff undertake and complete the whole of the on-line training programme provided by the GLRO.
8	Totems provided by the GLRO to be displayed at every polling station	CROs shall secure the display of one of the polling station totems provided by the GLRO in every polling station.
9	Each borough to include postal votes from Royal Mail sorting office 'sweep' in count	CROs shall secure the inclusion of postal votes collected via a 'sweep' of mail sorting offices on the evening of 6 May 2021 in the postal vote ballot boxes delivered to the count.
10	Count start times	CROs shall secure the count commences at 9am prompt on Friday 7 May 2021 and 8am prompt on Saturday 8 May with the opening of the ballot boxes. No activity is to start before the agreed times on either day.
11	Manual Count of ballot papers	CROs shall ensure that a manual count of one selected ballot box tray of ballot papers takes place at 2pm on the day of their count.
12	GLRO to be consulted on any intention to grant a request for a re-count	CROs shall consult the GLRO on any request for a re-count which they are minded to grant before exercising their power to do so.
13	Each borough to follow Electoral Commission and GLRO guidance in preparing and delivering the poll in a coronavirus pandemic	CROs to coordinate the poll in line with EC and GLRO guidance and to follow general public health principles to mitigate the risk of coronavirus especially in managing polling station voting and at the count centres

Detail of above Directions

1	Compliance with legislation, Electoral Commission (EC) Guidance, and EC Performance Standards required
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure: the delivery of the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections within the law; compliance with the EC's guidance and performance standards; and, as a result, consistency of experience for all voters, candidates and agents.

2	Key plans and documents to be made available on request
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- The purpose of this direction is to allow the GLRO to have access to CROs' and BROs' plans and documents, as specified in the EC Guidance, should it be necessary for the GLRO to assure herself or stakeholders that each CRO and BRO has the necessary plans and resources in place.
- All integrity plans will need to be submitted to the GLRO to enable her to produce a timely London-wide integrity plan as required by EC Guidance.
- There will be integrity and security concerns which are London-wide. The GLRO will provide information on the London-wide concerns to be included in CROs' and BROs' plans.

3	Poll cards to include specified information about the mayoral election address booklet
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that all poll cards include the same wording to inform electors where they can find information on-line about candidates and how to vote, as well as when to expect delivery of the printed mayoral election address booklet.
- This wording (in italics here to identify the text) must be included on all poll cards sent to electors voting in person, by proxy or by post: *Additional information on candidates' details and on how to vote can be found in the elections booklet which will be on-line at www.londonelects.org.uk/booklet from 7th April and delivered to all electors during April.*

4	Delivery of poll cards (bulk run) to be completed no later than 8th April 2021
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that poll cards dispatched in the first bulk run arrive on doorsteps **no later** than **8th April 2021** so all electors receive them to have sufficient time to apply for a postal or proxy vote.

5	Only postal vote packs specified by GLRO to be used
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that all postal voters have the best opportunity to understand how to cast all four of their votes.
- The GLRO is working directly with all the printers of postal packs to ensure that all postal voters have the same information about the votes they have and how to cast them.

6	Issue of postal votes to start no earlier than 14th April 2021 and as soon after that as reasonably practicable
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that postal voters across London receive the mayoral election address booklet before they cast their votes, but that they do not receive their postal vote packs very much later after their election address booklet has arrived.
- The mayoral election address booklet cannot be printed and distributed until after close of nominations and should be delivered to all postal voters by 13th April.
- Co-ordinating the delivery of the mayoral election address booklet and postal votes mitigates the risk of postal voters casting their votes before seeing the booklet and then complaining they did not have the information in time and/or asking to cancel their postal vote.

7	All polling station staff to complete the on-line training programme provided by the GLRO
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that all polling station staff undertake and complete the whole of the on-line training programme provided by the GLRO so: they are fully informed about the three ballot papers and four votes; and fully understand that they are to encourage every elector to take all three ballot papers and to use all four votes.
- The GLRO's online training will be available by end of March 2021.
- CROs and BROs can supplement the on-line training with any local training they think will be required. It is expected that CROs and BROs will want to provide all Presiding Officers with some face-to-face training at the time they collect their ballot boxes.
- It is acknowledged that if polling station staff need to be appointed at the last minute to cover for unexpected absences, that substitute staff may not have the time to complete the on-line training.

8	Totems provided by the GLRO to be displayed at every polling station
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that clear information on the three ballot papers and four votes is on display at all polling stations.
- Each totem must be positioned in the polling station so it can be read by all voters.

9	Each borough to include postal votes from the Royal Mail sorting office 'sweep' in count
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that there are no postal votes stuck in the mail system at 10pm on 6 May 2021, but that these are instead retrieved and included in the postal vote ballot boxes included in the count consistently across London.
- London Elects will organise a 'sweep' of every sorting office centrally with the Royal Mail and pay for the Royal Mail directly for this.
- CROs shall secure the inclusion of such postal votes in the postal vote ballot boxes delivered to the count by ensuring that local arrangements are in place for the timely delivery of postal votes retrieved in the 'sweep' to be processed in the normal way.

10	Count start times
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that all counts commence with the opening of the ballot boxes at **9am prompt** on Friday 7th May 2021 and at **8am prompt** on Saturday 8th May 2021– and not before.
- CROs shall prioritise the opening and registration of enough ballot boxes to ensure that all scanners have started scanning ballot papers as soon as possible after 9am on the Friday and 8am on the Saturday respectively.

11	Manual Count of ballot paper
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure that all counts undertake a manual count of one selected ballot box tray of ballot papers.
- This process will be conducted to provide confidence in the accuracy of the e-count system. This is supplementary to the rigorous testing process that has been conducted, which has involved over 10 million scans of ballot papers.
- The manual count must commence at **2pm** on your allocated count day
- Further guidance on this process will be supplied by the GLRO.

12	GLRO to be consulted on any intention to grant a request for a re-count
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure a consistent approach is taken to requests for recounts.

- Requests for a re-count can only be made after provisional results have been shared with agents locally after the constituency count.
- CROs shall inform the GLRO of the circumstances of any request for a re-count of the votes that they are minded to grant, exercising their power under the following rules:
 - rule 52 of the Constituency Member Elections rules
 - rule 53 of the London Member Election rules, or
 - rule 52 of the Mayoral Election rules.

13	Each borough to follow Electoral Commission and GLRO guidance in preparing and delivering the poll in a coronavirus pandemic
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- The purpose of this direction is to ensure a consistent approach is taken in delivering the poll during the coronavirus pandemic.
- CROs must follow EC and GLRO guidance to manage the challenges faced as a result of the current public health situation.
- CROs must comply with any regulations or legal requirements in force under Coronavirus legislation.
- CROs must follow EC guidance on the management and set up of polling stations and the GLRO will provide direction on the minimum standards of PPE to be used at every polling station.
- The GLRO will provide guidance on the management of each e-count to ensure the usual principles of consistent, accessible and secure counts are supplemented with measures to provide confidence around the public health elements of the count.