

7 February 2022

Prospective Candidates for

All Borough Wards

Cc: Election agents

Dear Prospective Candidate

### **Borough Elections – Thursday 5 May 2022**

The Returning Officer (Sharon Bridglalsingh) will make the arrangements for these elections. In addition to elections for 19 Borough Wards, there will also be Parish elections for a small number of additional parish seats (8) created by a recent Community Governance Review.

This letter contains information about the election from the nominations process through to after the declaration of results. I will write to validly nominated candidates again in April with further information and to highlight any issues that have arisen during the campaign.

### **Covid 19**

Our current planning assumptions are that light touch precautions will be in place at key venues, but that enforced social distancing will not be required as it was in May 2021. We will of course continue to keep the situation under review, seek advice from public health colleagues as required and communicate any significant changes to our approach.

### **Key dates**

A timetable for the election is enclosed. In addition to statutory dates and deadlines, the timetable includes local arrangements such as the dates for the dispatch of postal votes and poll cards.

### **Guidance for candidates and agents**

The Electoral Commission (EC) publishes resources and detailed guidance which provides practical advice for candidates and agents.

The main guidance documents are:

1. Can you stand for election?
2. Standing as an independent or party candidate (as appropriate)
3. Spending and donations
4. The campaign
5. Your right to attend key electoral events
6. After the declaration of the result

Links to additional documents and resources are highlighted in guidance documents and both may be downloaded from the [Commission's website](#).

Please note the following arrangements which have been made in connection with the above election.

### **Local briefing**

To help ensure you are fully aware of how this election will be conducted, we have arranged a briefing session for election agents and candidates. The details are as follows:

Thursday 10 March: 6pm – 7.30pm (Room 1.01 / 1.02 Civic Offices and Microsoft Teams)

The content will focus on the nominations process, the electoral timetable and the legal responsibilities of candidates and agents. Attendance will therefore be important. Please contact Peter Taylor ([peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk)) for an invitation.

A further briefing will be provided on Tuesday 12 April at 6pm for validly nominated candidates and their agents, after the close of nominations. We are hoping to hold this briefing session at the count venue and will confirm the arrangements in due course. More detailed information about the poll and the count will be provided during the briefing.

### **Delivery of nomination papers**

Forms for nomination are available on the Council's [website](#) with Ward information pre-populated. We will also be pleased to supply nomination papers if you have any difficulty accessing the online versions.

You must complete and submit the following forms:

- a nomination paper
- a home address form
- your consent to nomination

Please note that temporary provisions to reduce the number of subscribers from ten to two expire at the end of February. You will therefore need ten local government electors for the ward in which you stand, to subscribe your nomination form.

In addition, if you wish to stand on behalf of a registered political party and use their emblem and name, or any of the party's registered descriptions, you must also submit the following:

- certificate of authorisation to use a party name or description
- an emblem request form.

Where appropriate, nomination forms should be accompanied by a completed 'Notification of election agent' form. If you do not appoint one, you will automatically become your own election agent.

These forms, collectively known as nomination papers, must be delivered by hand to **Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ** between 10am and 4pm from Monday 28 March to Tuesday 5 April. I would encourage you to make an appointment for informal check / delivery, but in any event, please ask for myself or Peter Taylor rather than handing nomination papers to security staff.

You can send scanned / photographed copies of nomination papers via an email for informal check or make an appointment for delivery, by contacting Peter Taylor on 01908 253930 or [peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk).

It is recommended that papers be delivered as early as possible to ensure you have sufficient time to arrange for a second nomination to be completed if there is a problem with the first one. Nomination papers can only be delivered **in person** by the candidate, or by someone on their behalf.

It is essential that nomination forms are fully and accurately completed. Please ensure in particular that the electoral numbers on both the nomination and consent include the distinctive letters of the polling district (two individual letters e.g. AA or FA), which are shown on the front of the Register, as well as the actual number.

**Register of electors**

Relevant registers for the area you are contesting will be provided on request, by the Electoral Registration Officer (via the Elections Office). The Registers will be supplied in electronic format unless a paper copy is specifically requested. These versions will be of the revised Register published on 1 March and will enable nomination papers to be completed. Because of the deadlines to register for 1 March register update, any electors wishing to subscribe papers will have to have registered by Monday 7 February.

In addition, as a candidate, you are entitled to request a copy of the electoral register which will be used for the election. As electors may register to vote up until twelve working days before the poll, the updated version will be officially published five working days before the poll. Should you wish to take up this entitlement, please advise us of your preference (data or paper), as soon as possible.

You are also entitled to a copy of the absent voters list (all those who have a postal or proxy vote), which we will be pleased to supply on request.

May I please stress that use of the register(s) is subject to a number of strict legal restrictions – please see paragraphs 1.9 – 1.13 of ‘The Campaign’ guidance.

**Spending and donations**

Please note the spending limits as follows:

Regulated period	Fixed amount	Variable amounts
Day after date of official candidacy until polling day	£806	7p per registered local government elector in each ward

If you need further help or clarification on the rules surrounding election expenses, please contact the Electoral Commission direct. Their contact details are on the final page of the ‘Spending & Donations’ guidance.

The elector number that candidates will need to calculate their spending limit is the total number of local government electors on the last date for publication of the notice of election i.e. 28 March 2022. Peter Taylor will provide total electorates for each Ward after that date.

After the election you will be required to submit a return of your election spending and donations received. Please note that actual expenses are not reimbursed. The return must be submitted to the Returning Officer by Friday 10 June 2022. Forms for this purpose are available to download from the Electoral Commission website and we will supply a paper set on request.

**The campaign**

May I particularly draw your attention to the following in the Electoral Commission ‘The Campaign’ guidance:

- That campaign materials, including websites, posters and literature distributed during the election must bear an imprint (Paragraphs 1.25 – 1.26 of ‘The Campaign’ guidance). If you are in any doubt, please refer to the Electoral Commission for guidance.

- The need to comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings, posters and large banners. You should not erect any election materials within the highway i.e. all verges and opens spaces up to legal property boundaries. Your co-operation in this respect will be much appreciated to avoid unnecessary problems and potential enforcement work.
- Postal votes. The Electoral Commission has agreed [a code of conduct for campaigning](#), which includes the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot papers. This code represents an agreed standard of acceptable behaviour that all candidates, agents and party workers are expected to follow in this election, without exception.

### **Attendance at key electoral events**

The Electoral Commission guidance 'Your right to attend key electoral events' provides helpful guidance to candidates on three key stages in the electoral process:

#### **Postal votes**

The candidate and his / her election agent are entitled to attend the opening of returned postal votes. Additionally, one agent may be appointed to attend the opening(s) on your behalf, by notifying the Returning Officer via Peter Taylor (01908 253930 or [peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk)) prior to the start of each session.

The opening of postal ballot papers received will take place in the Chamber at Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ.

The initial sessions will on Monday 25 April at 2pm and 6.30pm. Thereafter openings will take place at the same times on subsequent weekdays with the exception of Monday 2 May which is a bank holiday. Depending on the timing and volumes of postal votes returned, some sessions may not be required, and I will advise candidates and agents as soon as I am able, where this is the case. There will be a final opening on Thursday 5 May at 2pm and again from 8.00pm at the same venue. Please note that during postal vote openings the ballot papers will be handled face down and you are not permitted to tally.

If there are any contested Parish elections a combined postal vote pack will be issued, but otherwise packs will contain a single white ballot paper for Borough elections. Opening sessions will be organised by Ward, and staff will do their best to communicate to Election Agents which wards will be dealt with at a particular session.

#### **Polling stations**

You and your election agent are entitled to observe proceedings inside polling stations. Additionally, you may appoint polling agents to attend polling stations on your behalf and the role of such individuals is described in paragraph. 1.25 of the 'Your right to attend key electoral events' guidance.

A form for the appointment of polling agents is available on the Electoral Commission website. Please note that the deadline for the appointment of polling agents is Wednesday 28 April.

In line with Electoral Commission guidance, ballot papers for each election/referendum, will be different colours:

Borough Wards - White

Parish and Parish Wards - Green

A list of polling stations and the electoral areas they serve will be made available to validly nominated candidates in due course.

### **The verification and count**

You and your election agents are entitled to observe the verification and count. You may also appoint counting agents to observe the proceedings and draw attention to anything which concerns them. You will be advised after the close of nominations, of the number you may appoint. The deadline for the appointment of counting agents is Wednesday 27 April.

The verification and count process will be undertaken from 9.00am on Friday 6 May at the [Milton Keynes Conference Centre](#), Strudwick Drive, Oldbrook, Milton Keynes, MK6 2TG.

I will write to all validly nominated candidates and their election agents with more detailed information about the verification and count. There will also be separate communications with any parish candidates in relation to attendance at the count.

### **After the declaration of the result**

The final guidance document in the Electoral Commission series describes some of the essential post-election activity. In summary:

- If elected, you will be required to sign your acceptance of office prior to the first meeting of the Council after these elections, but we prefer if acceptances of office are signed immediately after the declaration.
- Within 35 calendar days of the election result being declared your election agent will need to prepare and submit to the Returning Officer an election spending return. In addition, both you and your election agent will need to sign a declaration stating that the return is complete and correct. Your election spending return is due to be submitted by Friday 10 June 2022.

New councillors will also need to register any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests with the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of taking up office. An induction package will be arranged for newly elected councillors and will be confirmed for week commencing 9 May 2022, which will cover this subject in more detail.

If there are any points of clarification, I will do my best to help.

Yours faithfully



Peter Brown  
Head of Democratic Services

### **Enclosed:**

Election timetable