

GUIDE TO COUNCIL PUBLICITY DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

1800 hours on 23 March 2026 up to and including 07 May 2026



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During the period leading up to the election, from 1800 hours on 23 March 2026, up to and including 7 May 2026, there are some guidelines the Council needs to follow by law. This guide is designed to complement the statutory guidance issued by the government to local authorities covering the period between the publication of an election and the election itself. Its aim is to ensure that members, officers and candidates are able to take a consistent and fair approach to the application of statutory principles that is also in line with the Council's values. Additional guidance is available via the LGA website, the Monitoring Officer or Acting Returning Officer. It applies to the 2026 Local Elections being held on 7 May 2026.
- 1.2 The main significance of the pre-election period is in the need for heightened sensitivity to ensure that Council resources are not used in any way that relates to party political issues or the election campaign.
- 1.3 As a general rule these restrictions do not affect the vast majority of employees and it is business as usual in almost all areas of our work.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 If, as part of your job, you provide advice and business planning for published decision-making by the council or you organise publicity, events, public consultations or you manage a council social media account, you should familiarise yourself with the pre-election rules which apply to councils, which are:
 - From the start of the pre-election period the council should take particular care with publicity. Publicity is defined as “any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or to a section of the public.”
 - Generally, the council should “not publish any material which, in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.” The Council should generally not issue any publicity which seeks to influence voters and that publicity relating to individuals involved directly in the election should not be published unless expressly authorised by statute.

- In relation to decision-making within the council, the position remains that it is 'business as usual' unless there are very good reasons why this should not be the case. In the vast majority of cases, the pre-election period will have no impact on normal council business, including the approval of planning decisions.
- The council will have to think carefully before it runs any local campaigns. If a campaign could be deemed likely to influence the outcome of the election, it will need to be deferred.
- In addition, the council will have to think carefully before it launches any new consultations. Unless it is a statutory duty or considered normal council business, such as budget consultations, it is recommended that the council avoids starting any new consultations or publishing report findings from consultation exercises, which could be politically sensitive.
- The council can still issue media releases on factual matters provided that these do not identify individual councillors or groups of councillors.

Staff must not:

- produce publicity on matters which are politically controversial
- make references to individual candidates or parties in press releases/on council-run social media channels
- arrange proactive media or events involving candidates
- issue photographs which include candidates
- supply council photographs or other documentation or materials unless it has been verified that they will not be used for campaigning purposes
- assist with an election campaign in any way
- display any campaign material on council property or allow candidates to use council premises for campaign purposes
- help with national political visits (as this would involve using public money to support a particular candidate or party). These should be organised by political parties with no cost or resource implications for the council.

More information about publicity during the pre-election period can be found on the [LGA website](#).

Details of PCC rooms that can be booked for the purposes of election, provided normal terms and conditions of booking are applied, can be found here:

[Rooms available for elections and referendums | PLYMOUTH.GOV.UK](#)

If Members or Officers have any questions regarding this guidance or in relation to particular circumstances, they should contact Liz Bryant liz.bryant@plymouth.gov.uk or Elinor Firth elinor.firth@plymouth.gov.uk

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