

London Borough of Southwark

Presiding Officer - Job Description

**Section/Department – Electoral Services, Finance &
Governance**

Responsible to – The Returning Officer

Presiding Officer Job Description

Purpose of the role:

As Presiding Officer you are responsible for the conduct of the ballot in your assigned polling station.

Polling Stations are open from 7:00am until 10:00pm; on polling day staff are required to arrive at the polling station at 6.00am to set up equipment and polling booths.

Presiding Officers are required to work a 17 hour day, and must provide their own refreshments and take appropriate breaks at quiet periods.

Presiding Officers are not permitted to leave the premises during the polling hours.

The role:

- To comply with any instructions from the Returning Officer
- To take charge of the assigned polling station
- To ensure that all electors are treated impartially and with respect
- To maintain the secrecy of the ballot
- To supervise the Poll Clerks at the polling station
- Attend training sessions as required by Electoral Services
- Liaise with the key holder/caretaker for the polling station before polling day to confirm arrangements for key collection/opening and closing of the building
- Visit the polling station before polling day, to check all arrangements are in place, including access to kitchens and toilet facilities
- Make contact with Poll Clerks before election day to confirm arrangements
- Respond to any calls and requests from the allocated Polling Station Inspector, before polling day and on the day itself
- Collect the Ballot Box and check contents prior to the election on the date identified by the Electoral Services team, and keep secure until polling day
- Transport ballot box, ballot papers and all assigned paperwork to the polling station
- Set up and organise the layout of allocated room (this includes lifting of polling booths)
- Ensure the polling station is open on time at 7am
- Be aware of any access/disability issues at the polling station
- Be responsible for health and safety at the polling station for all staff and visitors
- Ensure that all signs and instructions are clear, visible and remain in place throughout the day
- Keep the polling station neat and tidy
- Ensure the polling station remains safe and Covid-secure by implementing measures including the use of PPE, signage, social distancing and frequent cleaning
- Instruct and supervise the work of the Poll Clerks
- Account for, and be responsible for, all ballot papers, issued and un-issued
- Check and mark electors' electoral numbers in the register of electors and on the corresponding numbers lists
- Issue ballot papers to voters, and manage this process effectively, so that a queue does not develop
- Ensure the voters cast their votes in secret and put them into the ballot box
- Provide assistance to voters where appropriate, and complete the necessary forms
- Receive postal votes delivered by hand, complete the required paperwork.

- Store postal votes securely in the wallets provided, and hand over to the Returning Officer as required – either to the Polling Station Inspector or at the count.
- Provide assistance to voters where appropriate, and complete the necessary forms
- Manage the attendance of those entitled to be present in the polling station e.g. candidates, agents, Electoral Commission representatives and observers, and ensure they do not interfere with the voting process
- Conduct an hourly poll – place this information on the form provided, and inform any election agent and tellers of the number when requested
- Be polite and professional when dealing with all visitors to the polling station and remain impartial at all times
- Monitor the activities of tellers outside the assigned polling place – the entrance to the polling station must not be impeded at any time
- Ensure the polling station is closed on time at 10pm
- Supervise the dismantling of the polling station and ensure the room is returned to good order
- Accurately complete the ballot paper account and associated paperwork
- Pack up all material in accordance with instructions given by the Returning Officer
- Deliver the ballot box and associated paperwork to the assigned triage site or count location
- Document any issues in the Presiding Officer logbook as well as give feedback on polling station staff and the polling station itself

In return, you can expect

- Full training on your role and responsibilities
- Full written instructions provided in Presiding Officers folder
- All stationery and equipment to carry out your duties
- Regular visits on polling day from a Polling Station Inspector (Auditor)
- Direct contact to the Elections Office and mobile phone numbers for senior staff
- Contact details for your colleagues, in particular the Polling Station Inspector who will be in touch with you the week before polling day.
- Payment by BACS the following month covering training and polling day work - providing that correct bank details have been submitted to the MEA before payroll cut-off date.

You may be required to perform additional duties not listed which are appropriate to your role and experience to ensure the smooth running of the election process. Job descriptions can be amended at the discretion of the Returning Officer to ensure service needs are met.

The Returning Officer is not permitted to employ anyone who is/or has carried out duties on behalf of any political party or candidate at the election.

We are legally obliged to ask you to provide evidence of your right to work in the UK. If you are successful in being appointed to this role, we will ask you to provide appropriate documents, such as a passport, visa or full birth certificate to confirm this. You will also be asked to complete a risk assessment to help us mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19.

All staff will be required to sign their agreement to maintain the secrecy of the poll.

If you have any queries please email: election.staffing@southwark.gov.uk or telephone 020 7525 7373.

Presiding Officer Personal Specification

EXPERIENCE

ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good understanding of the election process • Experience of applying a regulatory framework in other areas of work e.g. within legal services, finance, HR etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous work on elections as a Presiding Officer or Poll Clerk experience • To have worked previously as a Poll Clerk within Southwark

SKILLS/PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully literate and numerate with excellent attention to detail • High level of personal presentation and professional manner • Punctual and reliable • Able to undertake training • Access to a computer to undertake online training • Ability to carry out work as instructed accurately while under pressure • Ability to remain politically neutral • Good communication skills and commitment to customer care - diplomacy and tact when working with members of the public • Good personal presentation • A team player and flexible attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous customer-service experience • Physically able to lift and carry heavy equipment in accordance with manual handling advice

OTHER

ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must not have worked in support of a political party/candidate at the election, whether paid or unpaid 	

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certain limitations may prevent you from working in polling stations in certain elections or wards such as being related to a candidate or having signed nomination papers for a candidate• Be able to attend training/briefing sessions and / or conduct online training session• Have a mobile phone which will be required to be on during the hours of poll• Must not have been convicted of an offence under Electoral Legislation• Acceptance of waiving of working time directive for period of employment• Compliance with requirement to secrecy and social media policy• Use of a car to transport ballot box (business insurance) | |
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