



# ***The 2024 TUSC Guide for Election Candidates & Agents***

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This document is a summary guide to the official regulations for candidates and election agents looking to contest the elections taking place in 2024 on Thursday May 2nd for 105 local authorities in England.

This year's TUSC guide also includes some information on contesting a parliamentary election. This is because the latest date that the next general election could be called is December 2024, and will probably be earlier.

The information in this document is based on the official guidance produced by the Electoral Commission, along with some tips and pointers drawn from the previous experience of TUSC election campaigners.

The guide explains the formal procedures that have to be followed to appear on the ballot paper in a local council election, the majority of which also apply to standing as a general election candidate. However there are specific issues relating to general election candidates which are dealt with in a separate section, Part Three.

In Part One, the section entitled, Before the Elections, the guide also includes information on the procedures agreed by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition on how to become a TUSC local council candidate.

But on the official election regulations it is only a summary guide. For a full explanation of election law, applicable for all elections in England, Wales and Scotland, you should go to the Electoral Commission's website at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents)

TUSC's National Election Agent, the National Nominating Officer registered with the Electoral Commission, is Clive Heemskerk. He can be contacted for advice at [cliveheemskerk@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:cliveheemskerk@socialistparty.org.uk) or, during the day, on 020-8988-8773.

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# Part One – Before the elections

## 1. Election campaigning in 2024

**1.1** The 2024 council elections will take place on Thursday May 2nd in 105 local authorities in England, alongside elections for the Greater London Authority (Mayor and Assembly), the Salford City Mayor, and the ‘Metro Mayors’ for the combined authorities of Greater Manchester, the Liverpool City Region, the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority, Tees Valley, West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

**1.2** These local elections will be the last set before the general election – if it is not, in fact, on the same day, as was the case for all the general elections from 1997 to 2015. The 2017 election, called for June 8th one month after that year’s local polls, and the 2019 election held in December, were exceptional in this respect too.

**1.3** But if the general election is to be held on May 2nd, Rishi Sunak does not have to ‘inform the King’ that he is announcing the dissolution of parliament until as late as March 25th, just over five weeks before polling day. That is also the date by when the formal Notices of Election for the local authorities with elections on May 2nd must be published and the first day it will be possible to hand in local council candidate nomination papers.

**1.4** This is one reason why the all-Britain TUSC steering committee sees the 2024 local elections at a minimum as a vital ‘dry run’ for the general election and is in favour of organising for the largest possible number of TUSC candidates to contest them.

### **The political significance of the 2024 local elections**

**1.5** TUSC has always taken local elections seriously. We have never accepted the idea that there is nothing that councils can do in the face of the cuts to their funding made by central government. Local authorities, we have argued, in fact retain both significant powers and resources that can be used to make an immediate difference to peoples’ lives, as well as the ability to lead a campaign for central-government funding. The TUSC briefings, the reports on councils’ reserves, and the guidance material for setting no cuts People’s Budgets and organising local campaigns, are unparalleled in the movement in explaining how local councillors could be part of the fightback.

**1.6** But in the 2024 elections, and in the campaigning for councils to set no cuts People’s Budgets for 2024-2025, TUSC’s arguments will be even more powerful than previously. With the almost certain prospect of at least a Starmer-led government coming into office during the course of the 2024-2025 financial year, what possible excuse is there for Labour councillors not to use councils’ borrowing powers and reserves to spend what’s needed now? And demand from Keir Starmer and the shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves that the incoming government will cover any shortfall there may be in meeting the bills? No excuse unless, of course, they do not believe that Reeves and Starmer will fund the local public services that we need. In which case, the argument is made for a challenge at the ballot box, for both the Town Hall and Westminster.

### **Wouldn’t council candidates distract from the general election campaign?**

**1.7** Plans should be made well in advance of March 2024 for the biggest possible number of TUSC candidates in the local elections. But if, on March 25th or before, the government announces a general election for the same day as the locals, wouldn’t having a large number of council candidates divert resources and activity away from the TUSC general election campaign?

**1.8** On the contrary. For a start it is a fact that many voters split their votes when a general election is held on the same day as the local elections, voting for a party that could realistically form a government in the Westminster ballot but making a different choice locally. TUSC experienced that in 2015, the last time we contested a general election, which was held on the same day as the locals. In Doncaster, for example, where the then Labour leader Ed Miliband is an MP, TUSC won 1,116 votes in the three parliamentary constituencies but 4,104 votes for the TUSC candidates who contested just over half of the council seats. While in Barnsley, TUSC won 937 votes in two of the three parliamentary constituencies but 2,434 for candidates contesting just under half of the borough's council seats. The more council candidates there are the more substantial is the overall vote for TUSC – which won a combined total of 118,125 votes in 2015.

**1.9** The campaigns can also complement each other by maximising the participation of TUSC supporters who come forward as candidates. Some might not feel confident to be a parliamentary candidate – and there are anyway a more limited number of parliamentary seats that can be contested in an area – but they can contribute by standing as a council candidate.

**1.10** And then, of course, the campaigns are politically complementary, even utilising the 'split voting' consciousness. 'We need to send the strongest message possible to Westminster by voting TUSC', the argument goes, 'but whichever establishment politician ends up in Number Ten, we will need TUSC councillors in our Town Hall to resist the coming cuts'.

## **The local elections and 'fair media coverage'**

**1.11** The broadcasting authorities' regulations for what they term 'fair media coverage' of political parties in election periods apply to local elections as they do to a general election. This means that if one-sixth of the council seats up for election in May 2024 are contested by candidates appearing on the ballot paper under the name of a political party or coalition registered with the Electoral Commission (or a registered variant of the party's name), they will qualify for 'fair media coverage'.

**1.12** With around 2,040 councillors being elected in 2024, in 105 local authorities in England (see the TUSC *Directory of Elections* at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/TUSC-Directory-of-Elections-2024.pdf>), that means 340 or so TUSC candidates would have to stand.

**1.13** One advantage of reaching the 'fair coverage' threshold for the local elections, if the general election is announced at just five weeks' notice in spring 2024, is financial. Local election candidates do not have to pay an election deposit, whereas the deposit required for each general election seat is £500. If the finances for a hundred-seat TUSC list to meet the general election fair coverage threshold are not in place by then – £50,000 in election deposits – we would still have a party election broadcast and the possibilities that the 'fair media' threshold opens for insisting on coverage in other outlets.

**1.14** The TUSC steering committee has published a campaign pack giving general guidance on organising for the general election, available both as a PDF at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/General-Election-Campaign-Pack-July-2023.pdf>, and in Word format at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/General-Election-Campaign-Pack-July-2023.docx>. But the conclusions concerning the 2024 local elections are clear. They are an integral part of preparing for the general election, politically and organisationally – and anyone who wants to play their part in building an alternative to the Tories and Sir Keir Starmer's Tory-lite 'New Labour Mark Two', should consider standing as a candidate.

## 2. Becoming a TUSC candidate in May

**2.1** TUSC was set-up in 2010 as an inclusive umbrella alliance, to enable fighting trade unionists, working class community campaigners, social movement activists, and socialists in different parties or none, to stand together in elections under a common name and logo on the ballot paper, while preserving their own identities. The only provision is that candidates are expected to endorse the TUSC core policy platform for the relevant election, a list of minimum commitments that voters could expect from someone elected under the TUSC banner. The core policy platform for the 2024 local elections is available on the TUSC website at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Local-election-platform-2024.pdf>

**2.2** Election candidates who wish to appear on the ballot paper on behalf of a registered party have to submit to the council's returning officer, along with their nomination forms, a *Certificate of Authorisation to use a Party Description*, signed by the registered Nominating Officer of the party. TUSC has produced a form to process applications for a *Certificate of Authorisation* for local council elections, available on the TUSC website on the Candidates page at <https://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024-Application-form-Clr.docx>. Submitting an application form will be taken as indicating a prospective candidate's agreement with the TUSC election platform.

**2.3** Many trade unionists, community campaigners, and individual socialists have appreciated the opportunity to stand under the TUSC banner, with the autonomy candidates have to run their own campaigns while being part of a national challenge to establishment politicians. Since 2010 over 2,000 candidates have appeared on the ballot paper under the TUSC umbrella and the steering committee encourages anyone who signs up to the core policy platform and who wants to stand to do so in 2024.

### What happens to candidate applications?

**2.4** Applications are placed before the TUSC All-Britain steering committee, which reflects TUSC's character as a coalition. It includes official representatives of the trade unions and socialist organisations currently participating in the coalition and elected representatives of TUSC individual members. Other leading trade unionists, with their own constituency within their union but not officially representing it on the committee, sit in a personal capacity. The steering committee operates by consensus not majority voting – nothing is agreed if a committee member or constituent organisation has strong objections.

**2.5** Many areas will have local TUSC steering committees or groups operating in a similar fashion and ideally TUSC candidates should be part of their local group. Candidate applications will be checked with local groups where they exist, if only to ensure that there are no competing applications likely for the same ward, that there is at least some co-ordination in a council area etc. But, as stated in the TUSC rules (see *How TUSC Functions*, at <http://www.tusc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/How-TUSC-Functions-September-2022.pdf>) it is the all-Britain steering committee that ultimately has the final say on coalition seats and candidates.

**2.6** Once applications are approved by the steering committee they will be posted on the candidates' page on the TUSC website and, before the official opening of nominations on Monday March 25th – or as soon as possible for applications received after that date – a TUSC *Certificate of Authorisation* will be sent to the candidate's election agent (whose details should be included on the application form).

**2.7** All applications received will get an acknowledgement from the TUSC National Agent stating which meeting of the steering committee will discuss them, and a list of the candidates approved will be posted up on the TUSC website within two days of the meeting.

## Questions in the candidate application form

**2.8** After the information requests on the form concerning the candidate's details and the details of the council and ward where the prospective candidate is proposing to stand, there are three questions under the heading, Election Campaign Details, which everyone should try and fill in to the best of their ability. The first two questions on the council Labour Group's budget proposals and recent record assist both the steering committee but also local TUSC campaigners on ideas for issues to fight on. Often council budget proposals are hundreds of pages long – the full details of which the steering committee does not need to know! – but an indication what has been cut and what is planned to be cut is what we are looking for.

**2.9** The last question on the application form under the Election Campaign Details heading concerns the position of the Labour candidate in relation to the policy retreats by Keir Starmer from Labour's 2019 election Manifesto and Jeremy Corbyn's ongoing suspension from the Parliamentary Labour Party. This was confirmed by the Labour Party national executive committee in March 2023 to mean that he will not be allowed to stand as a Labour candidate at the general election.

**2.10** Again such information helps the steering committee deal with any questions or queries TUSC supporters and component organisations may have in terms of the seats TUSC hopes to challenge for, that TUSC is not standing against any of the last genuine pro-Corbyn candidates who have used their position to speak out in defence of Corbyn and against austerity, and who may be possible future allies in the battle for a new vehicle for working class political representation.

**2.11** How to get such information? In many cases the Labour candidate will be a sitting councillor, and a simple Google search of their name alongside Corbyn will show if they have spoken out in any way. But if you do not know who the candidate is or you can find nothing on their record in relation to Jeremy Corbyn or the 2019 Manifesto policies do not worry; any other information on the character of the local council Labour Group or the ward Labour Party may be helpful as an alternative.

**2.12** And lastly, please complete the election agent details, including the full postal address. An e-copy of the *Certificate of Authorisation* from the TUSC National Nominating Officer will not be accepted by the council election officers and the agent's address is where we will send the hard copy that you will need to get onto the ballot paper.

### 3. The election timetable – summary

**January-March** – The TUSC steering committee will process candidate applications from its first meeting in 2024 – and at subsequent meetings in the February-March period.

So check out the Events page on the TUSC website for dates of the steering committee meetings and remember – candidate applications must be received **at least two days** before in order to be processed at the meeting.

Approved applications will be posted up on the TUSC website within two days of the meeting and candidates can get on with their campaigns immediately. However, the signed *Certificates of Authorisation* need to get on the ballot paper will only be sent out to agents from mid-March, before the first date it is possible to hand in nomination papers (see timetable below) to council electoral services.

#### The official nomination timetable

Many of the dates below are still provisional and yet to be fully confirmed by the Electoral Commission. If there are any changes made we will update this guide, announce that on the website, and communicate to all TUSC agents, groups and known candidates.

**Monday March 5th** – The first date on which candidates for the May 2024 local elections can sign their official Consent to Nomination form (see paragraph 5.14).

**Monday March 25th** – The official Notices of Election for the local authority elections must be published no later than this day. This is also the first day of the ‘regulated period’ for local election candidates’ election spending (see paragraph 8.2). Local election candidate nomination papers can be handed in from this point.

**Friday April 5th** – The deadline for the delivery of the official nomination papers (**4pm**) for the local elections. This is also the deadline for the official appointment of election agents.

**Monday April 8th** – The deadline (**4pm**) for the returning officer to publish a statement of persons nominated.

**Thursday April 11th** – The last day to register to vote for the May elections

**Thursday May 2nd** – Polling day (7am to 10pm)

**Friday June 7th** – Deadline for the delivery of election spending returns to the Returning Officer (see paragraph 8.9) for local election candidates.

# Part Two – The local elections

## 4. Who can stand for election in May?

4.1 To be able to stand as a candidate at a local government election you must:

- be at least 18 years old on the day of your nomination (16 in Scotland and Wales)
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the European Union
- meet at least **one** of the following four qualifications:
  - (a) You are registered as a local government elector for the local authority area in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.

Note: “Local authority area” here means the council, not necessarily the local ward in which you are standing. This is a common source of confusion. So to be clear – if you are registered in New Town council you can stand for a seat in any ward on that council.

- (b) You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of the election.
- (c) Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the local authority area.
- (d) You have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the election. You are **not** required to have lived at the same address for the whole of the 12 months, but you must have lived in the same local authority and you must be living in the local authority area from March 25th to polling day.

4.2 Apart from meeting the qualifications for standing for election, you must also not be disqualified from standing. You cannot be a local council candidate if at the time of your nomination and on the day of the election:

- (i) In **England**, you are employed by the local authority that you are proposing to stand for or hold a paid office where your appointment has been made, or could be made, by the local authority itself or by any joint committee where the local authority is represented. In **Wales**, however, the Senedd’s 2021 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act has removed this restriction, allowing council employees (other than those holding politically restricted posts – see below) to stand for election.
- (ii) You hold a politically restricted post such as a local authority statutory chief officer (for example, chief education officer, chief officer at certain fire brigades, or the director of social services).
- (iii) You are the subject of a currently operative bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- (iv) You have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.

Remember: the council’s Returning Officer (to whom your nomination papers are submitted) will not be able to confirm whether or not you are disqualified so if you are in any doubt, you should seek advice.



## 5. The official nomination papers

**5.1** To appear on the ballot paper as a candidate you will need to submit a completed set of nomination papers to the local council's Returning Officer by no later than **4pm on Friday 5th April**. This deadline is set out in law and cannot be changed for any reason. The start date from which the candidate or the local election agent will be able to submit nomination papers, as well as the times and place for delivery, will be set out in the official notice of election published by the council's Returning Officer no later than Monday 25th March.

**5.2** Once you have completed your forms many councils will prefer if you book an appointment with the elections office to hand in the forms and have them checked and provisionally authorised. But allow ample time before the deadline! If there is problem or mistake you will be able to go away and rectify it.

**5.3** Candidates or agents can obtain nomination papers from a council's local Electoral Services office. Alternatively, the national Electoral Commission has produced a set of nomination papers that can be used, available from its website at <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england>

**5.4** To appear on the ballot paper as a TUSC candidate in a local election the following papers must be submitted to make a nomination valid:

(i) *The Nomination Paper*.

(ii) *A Home Address form*.

(iii) *A Candidate's Consent to Nomination form*.

(iv) *A TUSC Certificate of Authorisation* giving the candidate permission to use the TUSC party name or a registered description on the ballot paper, signed by the TUSC National Nominating Officer (the National Election Agent).

(v) *A Request For A Party Emblem form* to use one of the three TUSC emblems registered with the Electoral Commission, signed by the candidate.

**5.5.** The Nomination Paper must include:

- The candidate's full name. This means their surname and other names in full. Using initials only could lead to the nomination paper being rejected.

Note: There is space on the form to include a commonly used name if the candidate is usually known by a name that is different from their actual name and they wish this to appear on the ballot paper – for example, Liz instead of Elizabeth. But for this to appear on the ballot paper it must be stated on the nomination form. If the commonly used name box on the nomination paper is left blank, then the candidate's actual name will be used.

- The signatures of two registered electors (known as subscribers) in the ward where the candidate is standing, who must appear on the register that is in force on March 25th.
- A description. The candidate can write in either the party's name as registered with the Commission (Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition) or one of the registered descriptions to appear on the ballot paper underneath the candidate's name.

**5.6** Each candidate's nomination paper needs to be signed ('subscribed' in the jargon) by two electors registered in the ward. The first elector signs and prints their name as the proposer and the other as the seconder. There is nothing that prevents a candidate from subscribing their own nomination paper as a proposer or seconder provided, of course, that they are a registered elector in the ward.

**5.7** The elector number of each subscriber as it appears on the electoral register, including the numbers or letters of the polling district, must be entered on the nomination form. (Make sure to check that you haven't accidentally used their house number!)

**5.8** Each elector may not subscribe more nomination papers than there are vacancies. For example, if there are two vacancies in a ward, an elector may subscribe up to two candidates' nomination papers in that ward. If three candidates submit nomination papers signed by the same person, the two that were submitted first will be accepted, but the third will be invalid. It is advisable therefore to enquire, before asking a subscriber to sign the nomination paper, if they have already signed someone else's form. If there are three seats up in your ward and you are standing three candidates in the ward – the elector can sign up to three forms.

**5.9** When filling in the description field on the nomination paper be sure that it exactly matches the party name or description on the TUSC *Certificate of Authorisation* that candidates' agents will have received from the TUSC National Nominating Officer. There has been some confusion in this area in recent years after the Electoral Commission changed their procedures in 2021 and removed party names from the list of registered 'descriptions' on its website, leading some electoral services staff to disallow TUSC candidates using 'Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition' in the description field – in other words, that they can't stand under the party name!

**5.10** But they are mistaken, with the official checklist issued by the Electoral Commission clearly stating, under the sub-heading, Certificate of Authorisation (Party Candidates Only): "Check the certificate allows the registered **party name** or description given on the nomination paper to be used (or allows the candidate to choose to use the **party name** or any registered description)". Don't be intimidated – and if there is a persisting problem, contact the TUSC National Nominating Officer to intercede.

**5.11** The home address form must be completed in full and must not contain abbreviations and it must include the candidate's home address – which, remember, does not need to be in the ward.

**5.12** Candidates can choose for their home address not to be included in the statement of persons nominated, which the council will publish at the close of nominations. In this case 'part two' of the form will need to be completed and signed, stating the name of the 'relevant area' – the council – in which your home address is situated, which will be published on the statement of persons nominated.

**5.13** The candidate's Consent to Nomination form must be completed in order for the nomination to be valid. The candidate must meet at least one of the qualifications to stand for election and it is advisable to state on the form as many of the qualifications as apply. For example fill both your address in the designated box and also if possible your elector number.

**5.14** Candidates are not allowed to sign the consent form earlier than one calendar month before the deadline for submitting nomination papers, ie **March 5th**. The signature must be witnessed, and the witness must sign the form and give their full name and address. There are no restrictions on who can be a witness to the consent to nomination.

## 6. The certificate of authorisation & emblems

**6.1** The TUSC *Certificate of Authorisation* will be sent out by the TUSC National Nominating Officer to **the candidate's agent** as named in the candidate application form. It cannot be sent electronically – only a 'wet-signed' *Certificate* can be accepted by the council's electoral services.

**6.2** The *Certificate* states that the named candidate can stand on behalf of TUSC and allows them to use one of the following:

- The exact party name as registered with the Electoral Commission: Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. This is the name the TUSC national steering committee is **recommending** that candidates in England use for the 2024 elections; or
- One of the party's registered descriptions. These include Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts and Trade Unionist and Socialist Candidate (and Scottish and Welsh descriptions).

**Note:** Candidates do **not** need to choose the description Trade Unionists and Socialists Against Cuts to use the TUSC AGAINST CUTS emblem No.3 (see below). This is a common source of confusion. You can use that **emblem** while appearing on the ballot paper as **Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition** or Trade Unionist and Socialist Candidate etc.

**6.3** The TUSC *Certificate of Authorisation* will generally be signed by the TUSC National Nominating Officer not by someone authorised by the Nominating Officer to do so on their behalf. Again this has occasionally confused electoral services staff used to dealing with the big parties who do delegate this function to a regional or district official. But if the *Certificate* is signed by Clive Heemskerk, the National Nominating Officer, there is no need for you to supply the council with a statement from him saying that he is empowered to do so!

**6.4** The other form in the nomination pack to complete is the *Request to Use an Emblem on the Ballot Paper* form. TUSC has two registered emblems available to use in England and Wales, as below, and the TUSC national steering committee is **recommending** that candidates use Emblem No.3.



Emblem  
No.1



Emblem  
No.3

**6.5** But it's your choice. (Emblem No.2, in case you're wondering, is a Scottish version of Emblem No.1). The *Request to Use an Emblem on the Ballot Paper* form must be **signed by the candidate**, not the local agent or the TUSC National Nominating Officer – this is also a common source of confusion. But once a candidate has received a *Certificate of Authorisation* from TUSC, **they** are responsible for their campaign, including choosing which emblem they want to appear on the ballot paper.

**6.6** After nomination papers have been submitted candidates will be sent a notice by the council's Returning Officer to let them know whether or not their nomination is valid.

## 7. The election agent

**7.1** The election agent is an important position, the person responsible for the proper management of the candidate's election campaign and, in particular, for its financial management. There are no particular qualifications needed to be an election agent and candidates can be their own agent if they wish. But a candidate must have an election agent. If they do not appoint an agent, they will become their own agent by default.

**7.2** The nomination pack from the council's Returning Officer should include a declaration form to appoint an agent, which should be signed by the candidate and by the agent to show their acceptance of the appointment.

**7.3** The form asks for the name, address and office address of the election agent. The agent can actually live anywhere but the **office address** – which can be someone's home address (the agent, the candidate, or another TUSC member) – must be within the same council area where the

election is being held, or within a district (or a London borough) which adjoins the council. The official guidance also makes it clear that the office address has to be physical address – “to which any legal notices can be delivered” – and therefore that PO boxes cannot be used.

**7.4** It makes administrative sense to have one election agent for each local council, not least as a point of contact with the TUSC National Election Agent. But TUSC is a coalition of different political forces and it is totally acceptable for candidates from one political party in a council area, for example, to have one agent, while individual candidates or candidates from another party have their own. But there must be co-ordination – which is another reason why the TUSC rules call for local steering committees or branches to “be established, where possible, for local government areas where it is planned to contest seats” (see *How TUSC Functions*).

## 8. Rules on election spending

**8.1** Candidates and their agents must follow certain rules about how much they can spend, who they can accept donations from, and what they must report after the election. The election agent has the main responsibility for complying with these rules. However after the election both the candidate and the agent must sign declarations to say that their spending and donation return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge.

**8.2** Candidate spending is expenditure on activities to promote a candidacy, or to criticise other candidates, during a particular period in the run-up to the election, the ‘regulated period’. The regulated period begins on the date someone officially becomes a candidate, which is when the official notice of election is published (**March 25th**). Someone officially becomes a candidate on that date if on or before then they have already declared themselves a candidate at the election (or another person has declared that they are a candidate – for example, on the TUSC website).

**8.3** The spending limit for the local elections for the regulated period is £960, plus 8p per local government elector on the register for the ward. The local electoral registration officer will be able to provide the number of electors in the ward to make this calculation.

**8.4** There are lower spending limits for joint candidates, ie where there are two or three TUSC candidates in the same ward. These are calculated by using the spending limit per candidate as explained above, and then reducing it by 25% – a quarter – if there are two joint candidates, or 33% – a third – if there are three or more joint candidates.

**8.5** The costs of most campaigning activities count towards the spending limit, including leaflets, posters, newspaper adverts, websites or YouTube videos, social media memes, mail-outs, offices and meetings. But meetings that are held mainly for purposes other than the candidate’s election campaign, where the candidate’s attendance is incidental – for example, a regular TUSC group meeting – do not need to be included.

**8.6** Also excluded is general campaign material promoting TUSC – it is only if it identifies a specific candidate or the specific electoral area in which a candidate is standing that it must be included in the candidate’s election spending records. Newspaper articles about a candidate – in distinction to paid-for adverts – also do not count as election spending.

**8.7** Costs can include items only partly used for an individual candidate’s election campaign, such as leaflets used both before and during the regulated period or shared leaflets with a candidate in another election taking place at the same time. These can be legitimately split between activities that count as the individual candidate’s spending and those that don’t but, unless a candidate’s expenditure is going to be near the spending limit, it can be easier to include the total cost of most ‘split items’ in the spending returns.

**8.8** The election agent must record all election spending, and must keep invoices or receipts for any payments **over £20**. This means recording what the spending was for – for example, leaflets

or a public meeting – the name and address of the supplier, the amount, and the date that the agent or the person authorised by the agent spent the money.

**8.9** After the election, the agent must deliver a spending and donations return to the local returning officer by no later than **Friday 7th June**. Both the agent and the candidate must also submit declarations that the return is complete and accurate. A return and declarations must still be submitted even if the candidate hasn't spent any money. This is called a 'nil return' (See **14. Election Expenses** below for more information).

## 9. Rules on donations to your campaign

**9.1** Candidates can only accept contributions ('donations') of money, items or services towards their campaign spending from certain sources, known as 'permissible donors', and must report them to the local Returning Officer after the election. These include contributions towards a candidate's campaign spending from TUSC, a local trade union branch, or constituent organisations of TUSC. Anything with a value of **£50 or less** does not count as a donation.

**9.2** 'Permissible donors' include:

- An individual registered on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors;
- A party on the Electoral Commission's Register of Political Parties – such as TUSC;
- A UK-registered trade union or one of its branches;
- A UK-based unincorporated association that carries on activities in the UK – such as the TUSC constituent organisations or local TUSC groups.

**9.3** When an agent receives any donation of **more than £50**, the following information must be recorded:

- The donor's name and address.
- The amount of the donation.
- The date on which the donation was accepted.

**9.4** The donor's address must be recorded as it is shown on the relevant statutory register (this is the electoral register for an individual, the register of trade unions for a union branch etc). If the donor is an unincorporated association the main office address must be put, as there is no register of unincorporated associations (an unincorporated association is broadly a group of two or more individuals who have come together to carry out a shared purpose).

**9.5** If the donation isn't from a permissible donor, it must be returned within 30 days (with the dates of the receipt and return of the donation recorded). If the donation isn't returned, the agent will be deemed to have accepted it and the Electoral Commission may apply to the courts for it to be forfeited.

**9.6** Money can be raised from crowdfunding websites for a candidate's campaign but permissibility checks are still needed, with the information on any individual donation of more than £50 recorded as if it had been received directly.

**9.7** After the election the agent will need to report these details in the spending and donations return. A form for use for returns, and forms for the agent's and candidate's declarations, are usually included in the original nominations pack or, sometimes, sent out separately by the Returning Officer. They cover all the information that must be included.

## 10. Getting the register of electors

**10.1** A candidate can start campaigning at any time. They do not have to wait until they are validly nominated to declare that they will run for election, publish campaign material, or canvass people for support. Doing the latter however is more effective with a copy of the electoral register.

**10.2** Once someone has officially become a candidate, they are entitled to a copy of the register of electors and absent voters' lists for the ward they are standing in to complete their nomination form and for canvassing purposes. But the earliest someone officially becomes a candidate is when the official notice of election is published (**March 25th**).

**10.3** Many council electoral services departments will release a copy of the electoral register to someone declaring themselves as a candidate before the official notice of election, once they have signed a legal assent form – a *Request for An Elector Register* form, available on the Electoral Commission website at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media/4917> – stating that the register will only be used for electoral purposes. But some Returning Officers do not give the same leeway to local TUSC candidates and agents as they do the establishment parties.

**10.4** They cannot do the same nationally however. Registered political parties are entitled to receive a copy of the full electoral register at any time so a local election agent designated by the TUSC National Nominating Officer is able to collect registers on behalf of prospective candidates before March 25th (another reason for sorting out who the local agent or agents will be as soon as possible!). But if you do need to contact the TUSC National Nominating Officer to intervene please try and provide a contact name and e-mail address (and telephone number if possible) of the electoral services staff member you spoke to; the name of the wards you want the register for (or alternatively, for the whole council area); and your address.

**10.5** The register will be supplied in electronic format unless a specific request is made for a paper copy.

## 11. Using council buildings for public meetings

**11.1** Election candidates are allowed to use schools and council maintained rooms for public meetings. The Electoral Registration Officer should keep a list of all suitable meeting rooms in their area and their availability, and should make this available for candidates and agents to inspect from the day of the notice of election.

**11.2** To use this facility you will need to contact the owner of the premises to make a booking, giving reasonable notice to reduce the risk of the request being refused.

**11.3** There is no hire charge for using these rooms, but you must pay for any expenses incurred, such as heating, lighting and cleaning (and for any damage to the premises). Candidates' right to use rooms does not include hours during which a school is used for educational purposes. Equally, any prior letting of a meeting room takes precedence.

## 12. Imprints on campaign material

**12.1** All campaign material must, by law, include an imprint to show who is responsible for its production. This means leaflets, posters and also, since the passage of the 2022 Elections Act, websites and other social media.

**12.2** On printed material such as leaflets and posters you must include the name and address of:

- the printer

- the 'promoter' (the agent)
- the candidate – or the organisation (TUSC) if the leaflet is promoting a number of candidates – on behalf of whom the material is being published

**12.3** The address must be one where the printer, agent or candidate can be contacted. That can be a home address or the agent's office address and, where a candidate has completed Part Two of the *Home Address* form in their nomination paperwork (see paragraph 5.12), it can be a PO Box address.

**12.4** An example of an imprint for a leaflet promoting an individual candidate would be:

Printed by [printer's name and address]. Promoted by [agent's name] of [agent's address], on behalf of [candidate's name] of [candidate's address].

If the candidate is also the agent, in other words the promoter of the material, the 'on behalf of' part of the imprint is not required.

**12.5** An example of an imprint for a leaflet promoting a group of TUSC candidates would be:

Printed by [printer's name and address]. Promoted by [agent's name] of [agent's address], on behalf of the TUSC candidates in [ward or council name].

**12.6** There are rules on where the imprint must be put. If the material is single-sided – such as a window poster – it must be put on the face of the document. If it is multi-sided, the imprint must be put on the first or last page.

**12.7** Imprints must also be included on electronic material, such as websites and emails. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced. This also applies for newspaper adverts.

**12.8** The bottom line is that material promoting a candidate (or disparaging another candidate) must have a contact address so that there is a line of accountability. An informal rule of thumb is: if someone wants to serve a writ for defamation against your campaign material – aside from taking the sensible advice not to defame people! – ask yourself, where would it be delivered to? If that's not on the material, you've broken the imprint law.

## 13. Joint campaigning with other groups

**13.1** As a coalition the different organisations participating in TUSC locally will probably incur expenditure in support of the TUSC election candidates. Additionally, sympathetic organisations not formally participating in TUSC or standing candidates themselves may also come forward with offers to help promote candidates as part of their own, independent campaigning activity. Under electoral law this is known and permitted as 'Third Party' activity although there are certain rules that the third parties, and TUSC election agents, have to follow.

**13.2** Any expenditure by a third party that "advertises (or otherwise promotes) to the public" an election candidate, including material that merely attacks other candidates or parties, must be authorised by that candidate's agent. This rule has often been used in the past, for example to hamstring CND, anti-racist campaigners, or environmental activists, at election times when no candidate has given authorisation to a third party's campaigning.

**13.3** But this problem can be overcome, however, if a TUSC candidate's agent issues what is known as a 'Section 75' authorisation to a named officer of a third party to "incur and pay" the costs of producing leaflets, holding a public meeting etc. The third party pays these costs, not the TUSC candidate, but they are authorised to do so by the local TUSC agent. A model 'Section 75' authorisation notice that can be adapted for local use is available from the TUSC National Agent.

**13.4** Third party material published under these provisions needs an election imprint, following the same rules as at paragraph **12.2**, but this is not the TUSC imprint – ie the third party is legally liable for the content. The named individual must also keep an account of expenditure incurred and submit them to the local TUSC agent no later than seven days after the election to be included in the TUSC candidate's spending returns.

**13.5** This all may seem a bit daunting to (electorally) inexperienced campaigners, but it shouldn't be. The advantage of such arrangements is that supportive but independent organisations not contesting the election can run their own campaign in an election period, which they wouldn't otherwise be able to do, but then 'strike together' with TUSC at the ballot box – in other words, supporting the TUSC candidate while promoting as they see fit their own profile and organisation. TUSC agents should offer them every encouragement to do so.

## 14. After the poll: Election Expenses

**14.1** After the election, the agent must deliver a spending and donations return to the local returning officer by no later than **Friday 7th June**. Both the agent and the candidate must also submit declarations that the return is complete and accurate. A return and declarations must still be submitted even if the candidate hasn't spent any money. This is called a 'nil return'.

**14.2** To avoid any possible confusion, this isn't for anyone to claim expenses from the council but to collate exactly what has been spent and donated for each candidate and on what exactly.

**14.3** While council Returning Officers may include the relevant forms in the nomination pack you will get at the start of the campaign, or send them separately to the agent, once again the Electoral Commission has standard forms that you can use, if you click on your relevant type of election (Local Elections in England etc) and then scroll to the bottom of the guidance to the *After The Declaration of Results* tab at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent>

**14.4** Here you can download the returns form that you will need to input the spending and donations data into, and two declaration forms to be signed alongside the returns – one for the agent and one for the candidate. There is also a guide alongside these forms on the Electoral Commission website; and TUSC nationally sends out a guide each year to all agents a week or so after polling day.



# Part Three – The general election

## 15. Differences with local election rules

**15.1** Most of the official regulations for contesting a parliamentary seat are the same as those that apply for local council elections. But there are some differences, such as the grounds on which someone can be disqualified from being a parliamentary candidate. Sometimes these are very slight but are nonetheless still important, and candidates and agents need to be aware of them.

**15.2** The rules for completing nomination papers for a parliamentary contest are a case in point. The process is very similar to that for the local elections (see paragraphs **5.1** to **5.14**) but there are some slight differences, namely:

- Candidates do not have to meet any local connection requirements in order to stand in a parliamentary constituency. Parliamentary candidates, for example, do not have to live or work in the constituency in which they intend to stand.
- Ten electors need to sign a parliamentary candidate's nomination paper not two, as for council elections (see paragraph **5.5**). They must be on the electoral register in the constituency but not in any specific council ward.

**15.3** The regulations covering the role and appointment of parliamentary election agents are also virtually the same as those for the local elections (see paragraphs **7.1** to **7.4**) with the only difference being that the agent's office address must be within the parliamentary constituency, or within a constituency which adjoins the constituency where you are standing (or within London, within a London borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency). Again, the office address must be a physical address, ie somewhere to which any legal notices could be delivered.

### Different grounds for disqualification of parliamentary candidates

**15.4** There are different grounds to disqualify someone from being a candidate in a parliamentary election than in a local election:

- (i) While there is no requirement in law for a candidate to be a registered elector in the UK, citizens of other countries (including EU member states other than the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta) are not eligible to become an MP.
- (ii) Certain post-holders are disqualified from becoming an MP. These include members of police forces, members of the armed forces, civil servants, judges, and members of the House of Lords.

### Spending rules for parliamentary elections

**15.5** The rules on how candidate spending is defined, how to deal with split costs, and what an agent needs to record, are the same for parliamentary and local election campaigns (see paragraphs **8.1** to **8.9**). But the spending limits are different and there are two separate 'regulated periods' within which spending on promoting a candidate, and donations to the candidate's campaign, need to be recorded.

**15.6** The first 'regulated period' when the spending limits and rules for parliamentary candidates apply, known as the 'long campaign', begins in **December 2023** and ends on the day that parliament is dissolved. It is at this point that the 'short campaign' regulated period starts.

**15.7** TUSC candidates and agents are not going to have to worry about breaching the parliamentary election spending limits. The limit for campaign spending in one constituency in the 'long campaign' is £40,220 plus 8p per registered parliamentary elector! The limit in the 'short

campaign' is £11,390 plus 8p per elector. But agents will have to keep a record of expenditure for both periods for the returns they will have to submit after the election.

**15.8** A couple of points to note. As for the local elections, the agent must keep invoices or receipts for any payments made of £20 and above but items used in the 'long campaign' that promote TUSC generally but do not include the candidate's name are covered by the rules on a national party's campaign expenditure and usually don't need to be counted. And payment of a candidate's parliamentary election deposit (see paragraph **16.1**) also does not count towards a candidate's spending limit.

## 16. Paying deposits in parliamentary elections

**16.1** The most obvious difference with contesting a local council seat is that to be a valid candidate in a parliamentary election the sum of £500 must be deposited with the Returning Officer by the deadline for nominations.

**16.2** The deposit cannot legally be refused if it is made using:

- Cash
- A UK banker's draft

**16.3** Some Returning Officers may also accept a deposit made by a debit or credit card payment or an electronic funds transfer but they legally able to refuse to do so. So if you want to pay the deposit in one of these ways, you must discuss with your Returning Officer if that is acceptable.

## 17. The right to a Freepost delivery

**17.1** The other major difference with local elections is that validly nominated parliamentary candidates are entitled to free postage on a leaflet – an 'election address' or 'election communication' – to be delivered to electors in the constituency they are contesting. Candidates are entitled to have the postage paid on either:

- One unaddressed election communication of up to 60 grams to every postal address; or
- One election communication of up to 60 grams individually addressed to each elector

But of course the print costs of these, and the cost of the special packaging requirements needed for delivery to the Royal Mail, have to be paid for by the TUSC candidate's campaign (for an average of 45,000 addresses per constituency or 75,000 individual electors).

**17.2** There are some restrictions on what can be included in a parliamentary election address, which must only contain matters relating to the election. Royal Mail check candidates' campaign material to confirm that it is acceptable, with a dedicated artwork team at [artwork.checking@royalmail.com](mailto:artwork.checking@royalmail.com), who must sign off artwork proofs before leaflets are printed.

**17.3** Royal Mail will also be able to help agents work out the volume of printed election material needed for each constituency. There is a section on their website with guidance on candidate mailings at [www.royalmail.com/candidatemail](http://www.royalmail.com/candidatemail) which agents should check out at the earliest opportunity if the local TUSC campaign is planning to use the Freepost facility.