



The Highland Council

Procedure for Community Council Elections

Counting of Votes - 27 November 2023

Prior to the count

Returned postal ballot papers for each Community Council Election will be handled by the Election Office and placed unopened in a ballot box (one for each election) and clearly marked on the outside of the box the name of the Community Council. Any ballots that were returned using nonstandard envelopes and had been opened ahead of the count will be resealed and placed in the relevant ballot box with the other envelopes.

The Election Office will arrange for ballot boxes to be collected from the Council Headquarters and taken to the Dingwall Council Offices Count Centre.

Count Venue

The count will commence at 12noon and will be held on Monday 27 November 2023 at the Highland Council Offices, High Street, Dingwall, IV15 9QN.

Candidates

All candidates will be notified of the date venue and time of the count to watch the online broadcast.

Overview of the Five Bar Method of Counting

This count will be using the five-bar method of recording votes for each candidate in the election.

1. Opening of Ballot Envelopes: The Ballot Box containing the envelopes for the Community Council to be counted should be opened and emptied on the table. Each envelope should be opened, and ballot papers unfolded and placed “face up” in piles.
2. Turnout: Once all the ballots have been extracted from the envelopes, they should be counted to ascertain the turnout. Ballots should be counted into bundles of 50 and verification cards placed with each bundle. Each bundle should be checked by another team member and signed. The Depute Returning Officer (DRO) will then collate the bundles to verify the total number of ballot papers and announce the turnout.
3. The Count: The Count should be carried out in pairs.
 - Ensure names on the count sheet are in the same order as the ballot paper this will help greatly with the recording of the votes.
 - The first team member will check the ballot ensuring it is valid and then read out the names of each person who has gained a vote. The second team member will make a single mark in the space beside each person vote using the 5-bar gate method of recording.
 - Any doubtful or spoilt votes should be set aside in the tray provided and at the end of the count with the DRO to adjudicate and determine whether the vote can be accepted or not. The DRO will then complete a rejected votes paper totalling the reasons rejected for each vote. This form is to be retained with the rejected ballot papers.

- Recounts: If any result between a candidate to be elected and a candidate not to be elected is close it may be appropriate to re-count the votes marked for these candidates only. It will not be necessary to re-count all the votes for the other candidate(s) who are sufficiently above or below the last candidate to be elected. The DRO will have the final say on whether a recount should be carried out.
- Tie: In the event of a tie between candidates for the last position to be filled that can't be resolved by a recount, the DRO should make arrangements to cut cards to decide the outcome. For the purposes of this event an "Ace" should be regarded as the highest value.
- The DRO will then announce the results of the election to all those present and complete a results form.
- The declaration of results are announced and copies are published on the Council's Website at www.highland.gov.uk/ccelections
- The Election Office will retain the counted ballot papers for 8 weeks in case there are queries about the conduct of the Election. Thereafter, dispose of the papers securely.

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