



Llais Cynghorau Cymuned a Thref yng Nghymru
The Voice of Community and Town Councils in Wales

Nodyn Datblygu Ymarfer 3

Practice Development Note 3

Amserlen Camau Cyn Etholiad

Pre-election Period Timetable of Actions

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OVW Practice Development Note 3

“Pre-Election Period” Annual Timetable of Actions

A simple guide for Community and Town Councils

| Action | Purpose | Timescale | At-a-glance timescale |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Introduction | | | |
| 1.1 The Pre-Election Period, previously known as purdah, is the time between an election is announced and the date the election is held. Central and local government are subject to certain restrictions on political activity during the run up to an election. Community and Town Councils should also observe these restrictions. | To avoid the allegation that public money is being spent to influence the outcome of the election. | Publication of Notice of Election triggers the start of the Pre-Election Period. The period runs until after the election. | The date of publication of the Notice of Election is the start of the Pre-Election Period. |

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|---|---------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <p>The term 'heightened sensitivity' is also used.</p> <p>Pre-election rules restrict activity wider than just publicity. Use of council facilities and resources; the code of conduct, developing new policies and holding of events - including some meetings - featuring elected officials should all be carefully considered during a period of heightened sensitivity.</p> | | | |

Some key tips:

- Don't call it Purdah! This term is no longer used. It's the Pre-Election Period.
- The Pre-Election Period does not mean that communications must shut down completely. This is not the case, and the ordinary functions of Councils can continue, but some restrictions may be imposed by law.
- During this period, the Council must take special care to avoid any suggestion of using Council resources for political purposes. Council resources include Council premises, IT equipment, email addresses, websites, telephones, photocopiers, Council stationery, postage, transport, and the use of Council staff time.
- Councillors may continue to use Council premises for Ward Surgeries, as long as they comply with all usual rules and measures. Councillors may also display Surgery Notices on Council noticeboards, provided the usual notice is being displayed.
- Do not issue publicity which creates a political advantage or disadvantage for any candidate or political party or influences voters in the Election.
- "Publicity" can include any communication, in whatever form, addressed to the public as a whole or to a section of the public. It includes speeches, interviews, items on the Council's websites, social media, notice boards, press releases, newsletters, leaflets, and newspaper articles issued by or on behalf of the Council. It can also include publicity issued by organisations which the Council funds.
- Where the Council holds public meetings or supports or assists in meetings organised by others, then this is also caught by the publicity rules. The intention behind the publicity does not matter, what is important is whether it 'appears' to be designed to affect support.
- Ordinary Council business should continue, including responding to Members' enquiries, dealing with Members' correspondence, Freedom of Information requests and providing information and assistance to Members in a fair and impartial manner, to support Members in discharging their Council role. However, during the Pre-Election Period, it is likely that even 'business as usual' may become increasingly politicised. Any factual information which may be provided to one ward councillor

(except when dealing with casework relating to an individual's personal circumstances) should also be provided to other councillors in the same ward, including those from different political parties.

- Clerks must take care to avoid allegations that particular officer proposals will affect support for one candidate or political party and defer meeting agenda items and decisions if that might reasonably be the case. Major consultation exercises should be avoided during the Pre-Election Period.
- This guidance provides general advice on the publicity restrictions that should be observed during the pre-election period. Further guidance can be found in this [short guide to publicity during the pre-election period](#) and [what the pre-election period means in practice](#). It should be read in conjunction with any guidance produced by your own Returning Officer or Monitoring Officer, which provides specific advice depending on your local circumstances.
- If in doubt, speak to your own local Returning Officer or Monitoring Officer.
- 2024 will be a busy year for elections. The poll for the election of Police and Crime Commissioners will take place on Thursday 2 May 2024. Notice of election will already have been published. Throughout the period between the publication of the notice and the close of poll the measures described above will apply. We can also expect a General Election later this year.