

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council arrangements for the media

Borough elections 2 May 2019

The verification and count will take place on **FRIDAY 3 MAY** from 10am at Bourne Hall, Spring Street, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 1UF.

To arrange your attendance at the count, please email the name, email address and job role of the individual/s wishing to attend to mrouson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk no later than Monday 29 April.

To obtain admission to the count the individual must have preregistered and be able to produce on entry...

- a current NUJ card, or
- photographic identity pass from a news media organisation, or
- an original letter of authority from a news media organisation supported by a second form of photographic identification.

By entering into the count hall you agree to abide by Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, a copy of the relevant details appear below.

Any filming/recording in the room where the count takes place will be at the discretion of the Returning Officer.

Taking photos or video on any device where the contents of any ballot could be identified is prohibited. This is to ensure the secrecy and integrity of the election.

- You can walk around the count floor to obtain general floor shots of the ongoing process
- You can film and record the declarations

Members of the media must not intrude on the count staff's work area. Interviews with staff undertaking or involved with the count are not permitted. Interviews with the Returning Officer can be arranged but will only take place when the count is completed.

Election agents will be present during the count. All interviews with candidates should be arranged through them.

There is a table reserved for the media, with power. Wi Fi is available

The count is taking place in the basement hall and mobile phone signals cannot be guaranteed

Your own food or drink will not be allowed in the count hall. Refreshments can be purchased on site from the coffee bar on the ground floor of Bourne Hall.

All the formal paperwork associated with this election can be downloaded from our website:

www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/council/elections-and-voting/borough-council-elections-2-May-2019

Mark Rouson from the council's communications team will be on site during the count to assist you.

Explanatory notes

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council operates the 'all out' system with elections for all 38 seats representing 13 wards every four years. Current composition of the borough council:

- Residents Association: 31 seats
- Conservative: 4 seats
- Labour: 3 seats

For the count we are working to the following timescale

- verification start time 10am
- anticipated Count start time 12 noon
- estimated full council declaration time by 4pm

Verification of each ward will take place and when that is complete we will undertake the count for each ward. An announcement of the result will be made ward-by-ward.

Verification

This is a simple process of counting the number of papers issued at each polling station or received from postal voters. The Returning Officer has to be satisfied that this number matches the official return made by the staff at the polling station and the postal vote return.

Each ballot box will be opened and the papers verified by count assistants working in pairs. Each box will be verified separately. When the number of papers in the box is confirmed as correct, the papers will be put back into the ballot box they were taken from and another box will be given to the staff. This process will continue until all of the boxes (including postal vote boxes) have been verified.

Once all the ballot papers have been verified and the Returning Officer is happy with the verification figures, then the count will start.

The Count

Before counting starts, papers from all the boxes in each ward count are mixed with the postal votes for that ward and the counting of the votes commences.

Ballot papers for each ward will be issued to all count teams who will sort the papers into piles for each candidate.

Sorted valid papers will be put into bundles of 25.

The count teams will also extract those papers where the intention of the voter is unclear. These papers are known as 'spoils' and will initially be vetted by the Returning Officer and her deputies. Where it is deemed necessary for the papers to be rejected the candidates and agents will also be afforded the opportunity to express an opinion whether they should be included in the count or not.

The results

Once agreed, the result for a ward is passed to the top table and a provisional result sheet is prepared. This will be shown to the candidates and election agents for their approval and to offer them the opportunity to request a re-count. The result for the ward will then be announced.

Bourne Hall background

Grade II listed Bourne Hall, is a community hub situated in the heart of historic Ewell village. It hosts a library, the local museum and various sized rooms used for functions and by a variety of local clubs and organisations.

This remarkable modern building with unique architectural interest has been open since 1970. It lies on the historic site of Garbrand Hall (circa 1770) and looks down on the headsprings of the river Hogsmill. The surrounding landscaped gardens and lake provide a beautiful, calming, rural village setting.

Notification of secrecy requirements – the count

Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended)

[...]

(2) Every person attending at the counting of the votes shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of voting and shall not –

(a) ascertain or attempt to ascertain at the counting of the votes the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper;

(b) communicate any information obtained at the counting of the votes as to the referendum answer for which any vote is given on any particular ballot paper.

[...]

(6) If a person acts in contravention of this section he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale* or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.

* In England and Wales, this is an unlimited fine