

Campaigning in a parish election



Note: this infosheet focuses on campaigning in the main annual parish elections in November each year. There may also be by-elections at the April parish meetings or at other points of the year.

What happens at the November parish meeting?

Often parish elections aren't contested. There are the same number of candidates as seats available (or sometimes fewer candidates!) so at the parish meeting the candidates are simply appointed.

But if there are more candidates than there are seats then everyone on the electoral roll in that parish is entitled to vote to decide who is elected. The first opportunity to vote is at the parish meeting on the first Wednesday in November. Anyone can go but only parishioners on the electoral roll are entitled to vote. Candidates generally encourage eligible friends, family and colleagues to come along to support them.

However, before a vote is held at the meeting, parishioners are asked whether the election should be 'deferred'. If seven or more voters raise their hands in favour of deferral the election will NOT be held at the parish meeting. Instead, a new notice will appear in the Gazette Officielle inviting all parishioners on the electoral roll to cast a vote in person at a polling station two weeks later.

By voting for the election to be deferred, parishioners are acknowledging that the election is competitive and ought to be decided by a wider range of voters than simply the ones at the meeting. Pushing for a deferred election can also be a strategic move by a candidate who believes that she or he is likely to have more support out in the parish than with those who have decided to come to the meeting.

If the meeting does not vote to defer, the election is held there and then. The names of the people who are standing are read out. Either the person, or their proposer, or both, give a short speech explaining why they should be elected. (Methods vary in each parish – in some parishes there are no speeches at all).

Voters are given a voting slip to record their choice of candidate(s) and this is given back to the Returning Officer to be counted. Voters have as many votes as there are seats. The count happens immediately and the result is announced that evening.

How does a deferred election work?

A deferred parish election is a smaller version of a general election. But unlike the general election, there is no ability for parishioners to vote by post, they have to go to a polling station.

Election Day is generally the third Wednesday in November.

For Douzenier elections, the Senior Constable of the parish is designated as the Returning Officer. The Dean of the Douzaine is the Returning Officer for Constable elections. The Returning Officers work with the parish staff team to make arrangements for the election – deciding where the polling station will be, printing the voting slips, arranging the count and announcing the result. The Returning Officers and the staff team are also responsible for keeping you informed as a candidate.

On Election Day, voters go to the designated polling station, their names are checked off against the electoral roll and they are given a voting slip to complete in a booth. Voters have as many votes as there are seats available. So if there are three Douzenier seats up for election and seven candidates standing (including any existing Douzeniers who are re-standing) the voter can tick up to three names from the list on the voting paper.

When the polls close, the vote count begins immediately and the result is announced by the respective Returning Officer later in the evening, usually at the Douzaine Room or Constables Office.

Campaigning in a deferred election

As a candidate for election, you are allowed to campaign to persuade people to vote for you. You can start as soon as you have been nominated but most people begin once it is clear that there will be a deferred election. Initially, canvassing may just consist of getting family, friends and acquaintances from the parish to attend the parish meeting with you either to vote for you on the evening or to ensure a successful vote for a deferred election, if that is what you seek.

The gap of just over three weeks between nominations closing and a deferred election is a short window of time and so it's worth starting your campaign planning early, particularly if you are intending to design and print campaign materials.

A big difference between a general election and parish elections is that there is no central communications team making sure everyone in the Island knows about the elections and who is standing. Parishes themselves have limited resources for publicising their elections and rely primarily on the notices in the Gazette Officielle. Hence turnout is traditionally low.

That means your campaign is not just about getting voters to vote for you, it's about getting parishioners to vote AT ALL.

Here are some things to consider when planning your campaign:

1. Decide how much you want to spend

You don't have to spend anything at all on your campaign – you could rely entirely on speaking to people personally and reaching out through social media.

But if you do decide to invest some money in campaigning you need to remember three things:

- a) There is no grant from the parish or the States. Whatever you spend comes out of your pocket.
- b) There is no equivalent of the Election2020 Candidate Manifesto booklet going through everyone's door.
- c) After the election, you must submit invoices or receipts for everything you have spent on campaigning.
- d) There is a limit to how much you are allowed to spend:

Electoral Districts	Maximum amount of election expenditure
The Parish of St. Peter Port	£700
The Parishes of St. Sampson, the Vale, the Castel and St. Martin	£465
The Parishes of St. Saviour, St. Pierre du Bois and St. Andrew	£290
The Parishes of Torteval and the Forest	£175

2. Pick the campaigning methods that are right for you

There are many different ways you could reach your voters and persuade them to come to the polling station to vote for you. Don't try to do all of them, you will exhaust yourself and your budget very quickly. Be strategic and focus on the methods that are appropriate for your skills, the voters you are targeting and your budget.

Here's a list of ways you could consider:

- a) Contact everyone you know personally in the parish
- b) Ask your family, friends, work colleagues or other networks (eg people at your sports club) to contact everyone they know in your parish.
- c) Put up posts and videos on your personal Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other social media channels and ask your followers to share them.
- d) Set up a separate Facebook page just for your campaign (this allows you to pay to boost posts and advertise).
- e) Hand deliver a manifesto leaflet to eligible households in the parish. Or just a postcard that directs people to your website or Facebook page.
- f) Knock on doors and speak to potential voters.
- g) Sit in a well-known public place and invite parishioners to come and talk to you there.
- h) Put up posters and banners.
- i) Advertise in the Guernsey Press or other media.
- j) Set up your own website.
- k) Do something inventive and different – like walking the High Street wearing a sandwich board.

Whichever method of communication you choose, make sure you explain the election itself – when it is, where you go to vote etc. Simply saying “Vote Jane Le Page for Douzenier” doesn't help the voter know why or what to do next. Your parish and the media may do some promotion of the election to the public but it won't be anything like as comprehensive as the general election in 2020.

Distributing leaflets by post

In a general election, some candidates arrange with Guernsey Post to deliver their manifestos to households. It is possible for Guernsey Post to distribute to one specific parish. But the cost would exceed the official spending limit and you can't just target part of a parish. So ordinary post, or hand delivery by yourself, or your volunteers, are the only options.

Walking the parish

Not every household contains people who are on the electoral roll. To help you target the right households, you can request a list of names and address on the electoral roll in your parish in either alphabetical order or in “walk order”. There may be a charge, particularly if you want a printed version. Contact Anne Cann at the Committee for

Home Affairs on 717000. You will need to have registered with the Office of the Data Protection Authority in order to receive access to electoral roll information. For further advice on data protection look on www.odpa.gg or contact the Commissioner's Office.

3. Work out how to sell yourself

No-one likes selling themselves but it is important that voters understand who you are and what you will bring to your parish. To help you focus, think about which voters are more likely to vote for you so you can tailor your message and the methods you use to communicate accordingly. Are you likely to appeal to younger people who use Instagram? Older people who like to meet someone before they vote for them?

Whether you are designing a leaflet, writing a speech for the parish meeting or posting on Facebook, here are some questions to consider:

- Who are you – both professionally and personally?
- What connection do you have to the parish?
- What are your skills and values?
- What motivated you to stand for election?
- What difference will electing you make to your voter's life?

For ideas on what to say, how to say it and how best to use photos and other images, have a look through the Candidate Manifesto booklet at the potential Deputies who stood out to you when you were voting in Election2020. If you have thrown yours away, the Election2020.gg website is still available.

Photos shouldn't be important in elections - but they are. Your photographer doesn't need to be a professional but see if you can find a friend or a family member who knows a bit about taking a good photo. Outside works best (better light). Choose a background that says something about you or the parish. Make sure you have a high resolution version of the photo (1MB+) so that it will reproduce well, particularly if it's cropped.

4. Consider DIY design tools

Candidates might have their campaign materials designed by a professional designer but most will do it themselves or ask a friend to do it. You could use Word or Powerpoint. Or Pages or Publisher if you have them.

Or you could use [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com) which is a free online tool with simple templates that you can adapt to give your homemade materials a professional look. It's good for designing social media graphics too.

If you want to go as far as designing your own simple website, try [Squarespace.com](https://www.squarespace.com) or [Wordpress.com](https://www.wordpress.com).

You can either print your materials out on your home printer or send a pdf to a local printer and get a quote. Or you could use an online print service like [Solopress.com](https://www.solopress.com) or [Vistaprint.co.uk](https://www.vistaprint.co.uk) (who also have online templates) but you run the risk of your materials being delayed or lost en route to Guernsey and you won't be supporting local businesses.

For a list of local printers, designers and other suppliers, go to the Resources section of www.womeninpubliclife.gg.

5. Media opportunities

Guernsey Press

Up until recently there was limited coverage of parish elections in our local media, especially when compared with a general election. However, recently the Guernsey Press has published the photos and manifestos of the candidates in deferred elections.

The Press will contact you after the parish meeting to tell you what they need. Working out in advance how to sell yourself (see Section 3 above) will make responding much easier.

Voter Information Hub

Women in Public Life's role in the parish elections is to inspire and support women to stand for election. However, it is much less likely that someone will consider standing if they aren't aware of parish elections or they've never voted in one.

That's why Women in Public Life puts together an online 'Voter Information Hub' for each deferred election that includes a page about each candidate showing their photo, contact details and a link to their leaflet. We then advertise the Hub in our newsletter and on social media.

To gather the information, we attend parish meetings and give each candidate a letter explaining what we need for the Information Hub and when we need it. Participation is entirely optional.

Your parish may also gather the same information for their own website.

Other information

Your parish will set its own rules for the parish election but generally speaking, they will be based on the rules for the general election. The [‘Information for Prospective Election Candidates’](#) in the ‘Standing’ section of [Election2020.gg](#) is therefore worth a read.

Posters: Election posters are exempt from planning permission for the campaigning period as long as you have the permission of the landowner. You can’t put posters up on anything that belongs to the States eg lampposts so focus on private gardens and buildings. Don’t forget to take your posters down immediately after the election.

Volunteers: You can use your friends and family to help you with any aspect of your campaign – distributing leaflets, creating a Facebook page etc. You don’t need to declare the value of their time. But if a business does something for you for free that they would normally charge for, you need to include the value of that service in your declaration of expenses.

Election Day: On Election Day you are permitted to stand outside the polling station to greet voters but not talk to them. You must not go into the polling station (except to vote yourself) or put up any posters inside the polling station or on the railings outside.

Offering assistance: You are allowed to assist voters to get to the polling station. For example, you or your volunteers could offer a lift to people with mobility difficulties.

Best of luck!

This information sheet has been researched and prepared by Women in Public Life volunteers and is believed to be accurate and up to date as at June 2023. No liability is accepted for any loss arising from its use. If you have a question or wish to make a correction, contact hello@womeninpubliclife.gg.