



**FIFE COUNCIL**

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS**

**THURSDAY 7 MAY 2026**

**COWDENBEATH/DUNFERMLINE/KIRKCALDY/**

**MID FIFE AND GLENROTHES/FIFE NORTH EAST CONSTITUENCIES**

**Constituency Returning Officer Guidance for Candidates and Agents**

**These should be read in full before completing and submitting your nomination papers.**

**Ken Gourlay  
Constituency Returning Officer  
February 2026**

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These notes are produced for the guidance and convenience of prospective candidates standing for election as a Member of the Scottish Parliament in the following constituencies:

- Cowdenbeath
- Dunfermline
- Kirkcaldy
- Mid Fife and Glenrothes
- Fife North East

This guide can help you, but it cannot replace the law, formal notices published by the Constituency Returning Officer (CRO) or guidance from the Electoral Commission.

While every care has been taken in the preparation of these notes, they do not have any binding force and candidates are advised, where necessary, to consult the relevant statutory authorities. For the Register of Electors or qualifications for absent and proxy voting, information may be obtained from the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO).

**The Constituency Returning Officer and their staff cannot give advice as to the conduct of the election campaign by candidates or agents, particularly in relation to the legality or otherwise of their actions.**

Candidates should also refer to the Electoral Commission's comprehensive [guidance for candidates and agents](#) which has been prepared by the Electoral Commission before submitting their nomination papers.

The Constituency Returning Officer will be holding two online briefing sessions for constituency candidates and election agents via Teams:

Pre-nomination briefing: Tuesday 17 February 2026 @ 6pm

This session will cover the nomination process.

Post nomination briefing: Monday 6 April 2026 @ 6pm

This session will cover the final arrangements for the conduct of the poll in Fife.

Useful Links

Electoral Commission: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

Fife Council Elections: [www.fife.gov.uk/scottishelection](http://www.fife.gov.uk/scottishelection)

Election Management Board for Scotland: [www.emb.scot](http://www.emb.scot)

## 1. Administration & Management of Election

The persons involved in the administration and management of the election are as follows:

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<b>Constituency Returning Officer</b>	<b>Depute Constituency Returning Officer</b>
Ken Gourlay Chief Executive Fife Council Fife House North Street Glenrothes KY7 5LT	Lindsay Thomson Head of Legal & Democratic Services Fife Council Fife House North Street Glenrothes KY7 5LT
T: 03451 55 55 55 Ext 440473 E: <a href="mailto:Ken.Gourlay@fife.gov.uk">Ken.Gourlay@fife.gov.uk</a>	T: 03451 55 55 55 Ext 430141 E: <a href="mailto:Lindsay.Thomson@fife.gov.uk">Lindsay.Thomson@fife.gov.uk</a>

The Constituency Returning Officer for Fife is also the Regional Returning Officer for the Mid Scotland and Fife region.

<b>Electoral Services Manager/Depute Constituency Returning Officer</b>	<b>Electoral Registration Officer (Fife)</b>
Shona Cameron Electoral Services Manager Fife Council Fife House North Street Glenrothes KY7 5LT	Lindsay Thomson Head of Legal & Democratic Services Fife Council Fife House North Street Glenrothes KY7 5LT
T: 01592 804414 E: <a href="mailto:shona.cameron@fife.gov.uk">shona.cameron@fife.gov.uk</a>	T: 03451 55 55 11, Option 1 E: <a href="mailto:voters.roll@fife.gov.uk">voters.roll@fife.gov.uk</a>

Information on the election is available to candidates, agents and members of the public via our website [www.fife.gov.uk/scottishelection](http://www.fife.gov.uk/scottishelection). This will include the "Statement of Persons Nominated and Notice of Poll" which will detail the candidates standing in each constituency after the close of nominations.

## 2. Election Team

The Election Team is based in the Election Office, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes, KY7 5LT. Please direct any enquiries to the Election Team in the first instance.

T: 03451 55 55 11, Option 2  
E: [election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk](mailto:election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk)

If you require any assistance including large print versions of this or any other document, please use the contact details above.

### 3. Nomination of Candidates

#### 3.1 General Provisions

- 3.1.1** The nomination form and consent to nomination form must be submitted by hand and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email, or other electronic means. The only exception to this is where a candidate is overseas, in which case their consent to nomination may be submitted electronically. Certificates of authorisation and emblem request forms may be submitted by hand or by post, but cannot be submitted by fax, email, or other electronic means.
- 3.1.2** Please ensure where signatures are required on any form that you submit the original signed version of each completed form and not a copy. Documents without original signatures cannot be accepted.
- 3.1.3** There are no restrictions on who may deliver your nomination papers. However, we recommend that you, your election agent, or someone you trust does this, so you can be sure they are delivered to the Constituency Returning Officer by the deadline of for receipt of nomination papers **4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.
- 3.1.4** Nomination papers for this election may be completed and lodged with the **Constituency Returning Officer, Election Office, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes, KY7 5LT** from **10.00am to 4.00pm** on any weekday after the date of publication of the Notice of Election, but in any event not later than **4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.

**Candidates are requested to make an appointment to submit their nomination papers by contacting the Election Team E: [election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk](mailto:election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk) T: 03451 55 55 11, Option 2. Please note that if you do not make an appointment, we cannot guarantee that someone will be available immediately to accept your papers.**

Please refer to Section 3.4 for information on the informal check of nomination papers prior to formal submission.

- 3.1.5** The Electoral Commission have prepared a short video to assist you in completing your nomination papers and these can be accessed here:

[Completing your nomination papers | Guidance for Scottish Parliament constituency candidates](#)

The Constituency Returning Officer can also provide you with annotated nomination papers to assist you. If you would like a copy of these please contact the Election Team on 03451 55 55 11, Option 2 or email [election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk](mailto:election.enquiries@fife.gov.uk).

- 3.1.6** It is a criminal offence to knowingly make a false statement on nomination papers. This includes a commonly used name given by a candidate on the nomination form which they do not actually commonly use.

The penalty for a false statement is either a fine, currently set at a maximum of £10,000 (or unlimited if convicted on indictment) and/or imprisonment.

## 3.2 Qualifications/Disqualifications

To be able to stand as a constituency candidate at a Scottish Parliament election you must, on the day you are nominated and on polling day, be:

- at least 18 years old and
- either a British citizen, an Irish Citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, or a qualifying foreign national.

There is no requirement in law for you to be a registered elector in Scotland.

Apart from meeting the qualifications for standing for election, you must also not be disqualified from standing on the day of your nomination and on polling day. Please refer to [the Electoral Commission's Guidance](#) for Candidates and Agents if you require more detailed guidance on this.

Questions of eligibility or disqualification are a matter for the candidate only and the Constituency Returning Officer cannot give advice on such matters.

You can be a candidate for both a constituency and a region, so long as the constituency is within the region. If you do this, you must stand for the same party in both contests, or be an independent in both contests. If you are elected at the constituency election, your name will be disregarded at the allocation of regional seats.

You cannot stand in more than one constituency or in more than one region.

## 3.3 Nomination Papers

### 3.3.1 Nomination Form

If you wish to stand as a constituency candidate, you must submit the following completed forms to the Constituency Returning Officer by **4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.

<b>SPE1</b>	Nomination Form
<b>SPE2</b>	Consent to Nomination Form

**These forms must be returned by hand.**

Attention is drawn to the rules for completing nomination papers and other provisions relating to nominations, as contained in Schedule 2 to the Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) Order 2015.

### 3.3.2 Consent to Nomination Form

You must formally consent to your nomination in writing using the prescribed form. You are required to give your date of birth and declare that you are not disqualified from standing.

If you are absent from the United Kingdom this consent may be sent electronically. In all other circumstances this must be delivered by hand.

### 3.3.3 Commonly Used Names

If a candidate uses a name which is different or partly different to their actual name, the candidate may request this be used instead of their actual name.

You may state a commonly used forename, surname, or both.

Please refer to [the Electoral Commission guidance](#) for candidates and agents for more information on the use of commonly used names.

### 3.3.4 Description of a Candidate/Use of Party Emblems (SPE3/SPE4)

A constituency candidate may only use one of the following descriptions:

- the word "Independent"
- the registered party name of a political party

Candidates **may not** use any of a party's registered descriptions.

If you are standing on behalf of a registered political party and wish to use the registered party name and emblem, you must also submit the following forms to the Constituency Returning Officer by **4.00pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.

**SPE3** Certificate of Authorisation  
**SPE4** Request for a Party Emblem

**These forms may be returned by hand or by post.**

A party name may only be used if the request is supported by a Certificate of Authorisation signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer before the close of nominations.

If you are standing on behalf of two or more political parties, an authorising certificate setting out the joint description is required from the Nominating Officer (or someone authorised to act on their behalf) of each of the parties.

A candidate standing on behalf of a political party whose nomination is supported by a valid Certificate of Authorisation may request, in writing, to have that party's emblem, or one of them, printed next to their name on the ballot paper. **Form SPE4** is provided for this purpose. It would be helpful for candidates from registered political parties, who wish to take advantage of this provision, to supply a copy of the chosen emblem when the request is made.

If you are standing on behalf of two or more political parties and using a joint description you may choose an emblem that has been registered by one of the parties that you are standing for.

Both the certificate of authorisation and the request to use a party emblem must be received by the Constituency Returning Officer by close of nominations i.e. not later than **4.00pm on Monday 1 April 2026**.

### 3.3.5 Candidate's deposit

In order for you to be valid nominated, you or someone acting on your behalf must deposit the sum of £500 with the Constituency Returning Officer by **no later than 4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.

We must receive your deposit by the closing date (**4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**). If you use an electronic, online or BACS payment, it is your responsibility to make sure that your deposit is actually in our bank account by the deadline.

You can pay by legal tender (cash), banker's cheque (where the drawer is a UK bank), or an electronic transfer of funds.

Certified cheques and banker's cheques should be made payable to "The Returning Officer."

**The preferred method of payment is by bank transfer using the following details:**

Bank:	Royal Bank of Scotland
Account Name:	Fife Council
Sort Code:	83-22-37
Account Number:	00197588
Reference:	Please use reference SPE (followed by candidate name)

Make sure your payment reference is clear and shows your name or the party name. If your reference is not clear then the payment might not be accepted, which would cause problems with your nomination.

Your deposit is only accepted when the money arrives in the Council's bank account. It is not enough for you to show us a receipt. It is your responsibility to make sure that we have your deposit in our account by the closing date (**4pm Wednesday 1 April 2026**).

We recommend you contact the Election Team by e-mail **before** making the payment to tell us:

- Date money to arrive in the council's account.
- Amount of money.
- Payment Reference.
- Name of Party /Candidate; and
- Contact point in the party if there is a query.

If you do not tell us in advance, your payment may be difficult for us to trace, and this may cause a delay in processing your nomination.

#### **Paying by Cash**

If you wish to pay cash, please contact the Election Team in advance so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

### 3.3.6 Returning your Deposit

The deposit, made by or on behalf of any candidate who has polled more than one-twentieth (5%) of the total number of valid votes cast at the Constituency Election, will be returned by the CRO by the next working day following the declaration of result.

If you do not get the necessary number of votes, your deposit will not be returned but will, instead, be paid to the Scottish Government.

We will refund the money by the next working day after the day on which the result of the election is declared. So, if the result is declared on Friday 8 May 2026, the refund of funds will be made on Monday 11 May 2026.

We will request confirmation of the details of the account you want the deposit to be returned to when you submit your nomination.

### **3.4 Informal Check of Nomination Papers**

Nomination papers must be checked for accuracy and conformity with statutory requirements when they are lodged. Occasionally the nomination papers cannot be accepted, and candidates are required to amend them to meet statutory requirements. It is therefore in the interest of candidates when lodging nomination papers to ensure that there is adequate time for any such amendment, as in no circumstances may the Constituency Returning Officer accept a nomination paper after **4.00pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**.

Nomination papers may be submitted to the Electoral Services Manager by email [shona.cameron@fife.gov.uk](mailto:shona.cameron@fife.gov.uk) for an informal check to be carried out before the formal submission of nomination papers. Any errors found will be communicated to the candidate and/or their election agent by email to allow these to be corrected before formal submission. However, it should be noted that the correct completion of the nomination forms remains your responsibility or that of your election agent.

**It is strongly advised that this is not left until the deadline day!**

### **3.5 Withdrawal of Nominations**

If you wish to withdraw your nomination, you may do so by lodging a Notice of Withdrawal signed by you and attested by one witness. The Notice of Withdrawal must be lodged with the Constituency Returning Officer at the address shown in paragraph 3.1.4 within the time for delivery of nomination papers.

You can download a Notice of Withdrawal Form from [the Electoral Commission website](#).

### **3.6 Post nomination**

The confirmation of a valid nomination letter will be issued by electronic means.

## **4. Appointment of Election Agent (SPE5)**

Each nominated candidate must appoint an election agent. You may act as your own election agent if you wish.

Notice of appointment of an election agent must be delivered to the Constituency Returning Officer at the address detailed in paragraph 3.1.4 by the close of nominations i.e. not later than **4.00pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026**. Form **SPE5** is provided for this purpose.

If you fail to notify the Constituency Returning Officer of the name and address of an election agent by the above-mentioned date, you shall be deemed to be acting as your own election agent.

An election agent must have an office address. The declaration notifying the relevant RO of the appointment of an election agent must include the office address. There are no restrictions on where the office can be located, but it must be a physical address to which any legal notices can be delivered – PO boxes or similar mailboxes cannot be used.

The agent's office address could be the local party office, an office set up for the election or their home address.

If the agent is using their home address as their office address and has made a request for a correspondence address to be published on any public notice instead of their home address, only the correspondence address will be published.

#### **4.1 Appoint of Sub Agent (SPE6)**

Election agents may appoint sub-agents for particular parts of the constituency in which you are standing as long as these do not overlap.

In the event of such appointments being made, the name and address of the sub-agents must be declared in writing to the Constituency Returning Officers at the address detailed in paragraph 3.1.4, **no later than Wednesday 2 May 2026**. **Form SPE6** is provided for this purpose. The Constituency Returning Officer will publish the name and address of each sub-agent appointed.

#### **5. Copy of Registers of Electors/Absent Voters Lists**

Candidates are entitled to one free copy of the full Electoral Register and Absent Voter lists for the constituency in which they are standing. The Electoral Registration Officer cannot supply a copy of the register or absent voter lists to any candidate earlier than 27 days before the 7 May 2026, the earliest a person can officially become a candidate (Thursday 26 March 2026).

For a candidate to receive a copy of the full Electoral Register and Absent Voter lists forms **SPE7/SPE8** should be completed, signed and returned and emailed to the ERO at [voters.roll@fife.gov.uk](mailto:voters.roll@fife.gov.uk).

It is important to note that candidates who have been supplied with a copy of the full register must not pass on a copy of the register to any other person, must not disclose any information from the register (which is not contained in the edited version of the register) or make use of such information except for electoral purposes and checking the validity of donations. Any person who is found guilty of breaching these conditions may face a fine of up to £5,000.

#### **6. Appointment of Polling Agents**

You may appoint polling agents to attend at polling stations for the purpose of detecting personation or to observe the procedures being followed in the polling station. Such appointments should be made by giving notice in writing to the Constituency Returning Officer at the address detailed in paragraph 3.1.4 not later than **Wednesday 29 April 2026**. Please contact the Election Team to request a copy of the relevant form.

Whilst there is no limit to the number of polling agents you may appoint, by law only one polling agent may be admitted at the same time to a polling station on behalf of the same candidate. If you wish your spouse/partner to visit polling stations with you on polling day, it will be necessary for them to be appointed as a polling agent. Polling agents can be appointed to a particular polling station or stations or to all polling stations within the constituency.

## **7. Appointment of Counting Agents**

You may appoint counting agents to attend at the verification and counting of the votes. The Constituency Returning Officer will confirm the number of counting agents who you may appoint at the Candidates and Agents meeting on **Monday 6 April 2026 @ 6pm**.

Notice of the appointment of counting agents, stating their names, full address and email address, should be given in writing to the Constituency Returning Officer at the address indicated in paragraph 3.1.4, not later than **Wednesday 29 April 2026**. Please contact the Election Team to request a copy of the relevant form.

## **8. Issue of Postal votes**

Postal Votes for the Scottish Parliament election will be undertaken in three separate issues:

The first despatch of postal votes for the Scottish Parliamentary elections is scheduled for on or around 15 April 2026. Anyone who applied for a postal vote up to Tuesday 24 March will be included in the first despatch.

The second despatch of postal votes will be on or around Friday 17 April 2026. Anyone who applied for a postal vote between Wednesday 25 March and Friday 10 April will be included in this despatch.

The final despatch of postal votes will be on or around Monday 27 April 2026. Anyone who applied for a postal vote between Monday 13 April and the deadline for new postal vote applications 5pm on Tuesday 21 April will be included in the final despatch.

## **9. Opening of Postal Votes**

The opening of postal votes will take place in Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes, KY7 5LT on the following provisional dates:

- Monday 27 April 2026 @ 10am (opening of covering envelopes only)
- Tuesday 28 April 2026 @ 10am
- Wednesday 29 April 2026 @ 10am
- Thursday 30 April 2026 @ 10am
- Friday 1 May 2026 @ 10am
- Monday 4 May 2026 @ 10am (contingency opening session only)
- Tuesday 5 May 2026 @ 10am
- Wednesday 6 May 2026 @ 10am
- Thursday 7 May 2026 @ 10am

Confirmation of dates and times of opening sessions will be confirmed at the candidates and agents meeting on Monday 6 April 2026.

The first session will be for the opening of covering envelopes only. The verification of postal vote personal identifiers will be undertaken electronically, and the formal adjudication process will commence on **Tuesday 28 April 2026**.

The venue and commencement time for the final opening session will be confirmed at the candidates and agents meeting. This session will include the opening of any postal votes handed in at polling stations up to the close of poll.

Candidates may appoint **one** postal voting agent to be present at each postal vote opening session and you should give notice of any such appointment to the Constituency Returning Officer at the address shown in paragraph 3.1.4 before the start of the opening session that the agent wishes to attend. **Form SPE11** is provided for this purpose.

There will be a briefing session explaining the scanning, verification and adjudication process for candidates and agents prior to the start of the first adjudication session.

#### **10. Notification of Requirement of Secrecy**

The Constituency Returning Officer is required to ensure that all persons involved in the election are given a copy in writing of the appropriate secrecy provisions of Article 31 of the Scottish Parliament (Elections etc) Order 2015.

Please ensure that anyone working or campaigning for you in or around the election is aware of these secrecy requirements.

This is a very serious matter, and breaches may be investigated by Police Scotland and could lead to fines or imprisonment.

#### **11. Verification and Counting of Votes Cast**

The verification and counting of votes cast will take place at the Michael Woods Centre, Viewfield, Glenrothes, KY6 2RD commencing on the morning of Friday 8 May 2026 @ 9am. The Constituency Returning Officer will confirm the arrangements for the verification and counting of votes cast at the candidates and agents meeting on Monday 6 April 2026.

Admission to the count will be restricted to the Constituency Returning Officer and their staff employed at the count, the Police, candidates, their election agent and counting agents, one guest for each candidate, accredited observers and members of the media authorised by the Constituency Returning Officer. Admission passes will be issued by the Constituency Returning Officer on receipt of the appropriate forms.

#### **12. Election Expenses**

Please refer to the Electoral Commission's guidance for candidates and agents for detailed information on the rules on spending and donations in the run up to the Scottish Parliament election.

Candidate spending and donation rules apply during the regulated period. The regulated period is divided into two periods; the "long campaign" and the "short campaign" and each period has its own spending limit.

The “**long campaign**” begins on 7 January 2026 and ends on the day you officially become a candidate. The earliest date you can become a candidate is Thursday 26 March 2026. The “**short campaign**” begins on the day after you officially become a candidate and ends on polling day.

In both the long and short campaigns, the spending limit is calculated by adding a base amount and a variable amount based on the number of electors in the constituency in which you are standing on the last day for the publication of the notice of election (Wednesday 25 March 2026) – the electorate figure will be provided in due course.

Constituency type	Long Campaign		Short Campaign	
	Fixed	Per Elector	Fixed	Per Elector
Borough	£21,500	4.2p	£8,700	6p
County	£21,500	6.3p	£8,700	9p

For information, Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Mid Fife and Glenrothes and Fife North East are “county” constituencies and Kirkcaldy is a “borough” constituency for the purposes of election spending.

Election agents must, within 35 days on the day on which the result of the election has been declared make a return of election expenses on the appropriate form, together with all bills and receipts for expenses over £20. At the same time that the election agent transmits that return or within 7 days afterwards, the candidate must submit a declaration as to their expenses.

A copy of the Electoral Commission’s candidate spending return along with the appropriate declarations which must be completed are available to download from the Electoral Commission’s website.

Please note that all queries regarding candidate election expenses should be directed to the Electoral Commission:

E: [infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk)

T: 0333 103 1928

### 13. Candidate Mailings

Each constituency candidate is entitled to free postage on an election communication sent to electors in their constituency. Please consult Royal Mail’s guidance on candidate mailings [www.royalmail.com/candidatemail](http://www.royalmail.com/candidatemail). If you would like to make use of this service, please contact Royal Mail directly.

### 14. Situations of Polling Stations

The situation of polling stations in each constituency will be published along with the Statement of Persons Nominated and Notice of Poll on Wednesday 1 April 2026 after the close of nominations. A copy will be provided to your election agent after close of nominations. Please contact the Election Team if you require a provisional list.

### 15. Conduct and Behaviour

We cannot give you any legal or other advice about how you or your team conduct your election campaign or about how you behave during the campaign.

We only run the election, we do not “police” or regulate it. If you have any specific concerns about the behaviour of any Candidates/Registered parties or how they are campaigning then you should contact either Police Scotland or the Electoral Commission, as appropriate.

The rules regarding the erection of campaign material at polling stations is currently being finalised and will be available at the candidates and agents' pre-nomination meeting on 17 February 2026.

## 16. Summary of Key Dates

A summary of the key dates at this election is set out below: -

<b>Monday 16 March 2026</b>	Publication of Notice of Election
<b>4pm on Wednesday 1 April 2026</b>	Deadline for delivery of Nomination Papers Deadline for Withdrawals of Nomination Deadline for notification of appointment of election agent
<b>5pm on Wednesday 1 April as possible</b>	Publication of Notice of Poll & Statement of Persons nominated including Situation of Polling Stations
<b>Monday 6 April @6pm</b>	Candidates & Agents Briefing Session
<b>Monday 20 April 2026</b>	Deadline for receiving applications for registration
<b>5pm on Tuesday 21 April 2026</b>	Deadline for receiving new postal vote and postal proxy applications and for changes to an existing postal vote or proxy votes
<b>5pm on Tuesday 28 April 2026</b>	Deadline for receiving new applications to vote by proxy (not postal proxy or emergency proxies)
<b>Wednesday 29 April 2026</b>	Deadline for notification of appointment of polling and counting agents
<b>Tuesday 5 May 2026</b>	Deadline for appointment of sub-agents
<b>Thursday 7 May 2026</b>	<b>POLLING DAY (7am to 10pm)</b>
<b>Friday 8 May 2026</b>	Verification and Counting of Votes Cast

## 17. Meeting of Candidates and Election Agents

The Constituency Returning Officer will be holding two online briefing sessions for constituency candidates and election agents via Teams:

Pre-nomination briefing: Tuesday 17 February 2026 @ 6pm

Post nomination briefing: Monday 6 April 2026 @ 6pm

Any candidate who is unable to attend may wish to be represented by their election agent or other representative.