



Election Guidelines 2017

Election Campaigns for:
Local Government in Scotland
Local Government in Wales
Local Government in parts of England (including mayoral elections)

Polling Day: 4th May 2017

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1.2 Elections

In Scotland, all 32 unitary authorities will hold elections using the Single Transferable Vote system. There are a total of 1,227 seats being contested in 353 wards.

In Wales, all 22 unitary authorities will hold elections using “First Past the Post” system. There are a total of 1,224 seats being contested.

In England elections using “First Past the Post”, take place in:

- all 27 County Councils (1787* seats contested)**
- 6 Unitary authorities (528* seats contested)**
- 1 Metropolitan Borough (55 seats contested)**

There are a total of 2370* seats being contested in England.

Plus 6 Combined Local Authority Mayoral elections (by supplementary vote) and 2 District Mayoral elections.

- *** to be confirmed**

For further information specific to each election, please refer to the Appendices.

2. Summary of Mandatory issues and referrals

2.1 During the Election Period:

- Any proposal to invite a politician or candidate on a programme or area of content where to do so is the exception rather than the rule, or which does not usually cover political subjects, must be referred to the Chief Adviser Politics first.*
- All bids for interviews or proposals to profile UK party leaders must be referred to the Chief Adviser Politics before parties are approached. Bids for party leaders in the nations should also be referred to the appropriate Heads of News in the nations. Offers of such interviews should also be referred before being accepted.*
- Any proposal to use a contribution from a candidate without an opportunity for comment or response from any other parties or candidates must be referred to a senior editorial figure and the Chief Adviser Politics. (see context 4.5).
- The BBC will not commission voting intention polls for publication during the campaign.
- Any proposal to commission an opinion poll on politics or any other matter of public policy for any BBC service must be referred to the Chief Adviser Politics.*
- There will be no votes (online, SMS/text or social media) attempting to quantify support for a party, a candidate or a party political policy issue.
- Any proposal to conduct a vote (online, text or social media) on any political issue that could have a bearing on any of the elections must be discussed with the Chief Adviser, Politics, as well as being referred to the relevant departmental senior editorial figure and ITACU.
- The BBC will not broadcast or publish numbers of e-mails, texts or other communications received on either side of any issue connected to the campaign.

* referral is also mandatory outside election periods.

2.2 Polling day (00.30 – 22.00)

- No opinion poll on any issue relating to the election may be published.
- There will be no coverage of any issues directly pertinent to the election campaigns on any BBC outlet or social media.
- It is a criminal offence to publish details of how people have voted in the elections.

3. The Guidelines

3.1 Their Purpose

There is no area of broadcasting where the BBC's commitment to due impartiality is more closely scrutinised than in reporting election campaigns.

These Guidelines are intended to offer a framework within which journalists:

- can operate in as free and creative an environment as possible.
- deliver to audiences impartial and independent reporting of the campaign, giving them fair coverage and rigorous scrutiny of the policies and campaigns of all parties.

The BBC is also legally obliged to adopt a **Code of Practice** with respect to “the participation of candidates at a parliamentary or local government election in items about the constituency or electoral area in question which are included in relevant services during the election period”. This obligation is fulfilled by [Section 5 of these Guidelines](#).

The BBC is also required, under the terms of its Charter and Agreement to ensure that political issues are covered with due accuracy and impartiality. These Election Guidelines supplement the Editorial Guidelines (Chapter 4, [“Impartiality and Diversity of Opinion”](#) and Chapter 10, [“Politics and Public Policy”](#)). They should, in particular, be read in conjunction with the sections in Chapter 10 on “Reporting UK Election and Referendum Campaigns” and “Broadcasting During Elections”, which say the BBC must ensure that:

- news judgements continue to drive editorial decision-making in news based programmes.
- news judgements at election time are made within a **framework of democratic debate** which ensures that due weight is given to hearing the views and examining and challenging the policies of all parties. Significant smaller parties should also receive some network coverage during the campaign.
- when producing UK-wide output, we are aware of the **different political structures** in the four nations of the United Kingdom and that they are reflected in the election coverage of each nation.

The Guidelines are publicly available and the BBC can expect to be held accountable for their implementation during the campaign.

From 22nd March, BBC output with regard to the election period is also subject to Sections 5 and 6 of the Ofcom Code.

3.2 Who the Guidelines apply to

It is the responsibility of each editor to ensure that their content producers are

aware of how the Guidelines apply to their output.

Any proposal to invite a politician or candidate on a programme or area of content where to do so is the exception rather than the rule, or which does not usually cover political subjects, must be referred to the Chief Adviser Politics first.

The Appendices set out information specific to the different elections and different parts of the UK.

Each programme strand, website or channel must bear in mind the location of its intended audience in applying these Guidelines.

These Guidelines apply to any content intended for UK audiences, covering any aspect of the election.

4 Due Impartiality

4.1 Coverage of Parties and Candidates

To achieve due impartiality, each bulletin, or series of summaries, daily programmes or programme strands, as well as online and interactive services, for each election covered, must ensure that the parties (and, where relevant, independent candidates) are covered proportionately over an appropriate period, normally across a week, or for weekly programmes across the campaign as a whole.

Determining appropriate levels of coverage should take into account levels of past and current electoral support (see Appendices).

Electoral support in the previous equivalent election is the starting point for making those judgements. However, other factors should be taken into account where appropriate, including evidence of variation in levels of support in more recent elections, changed political circumstances (e.g. new parties or party splits) as well as other evidence of current support. The number of candidates a party is standing may also be a factor.

4.2 Impartiality in Programmes and Online Content

Daily news magazine programmes should normally achieve proportional and appropriate coverage within the course of each week of the campaign.

Each strand (e.g. a drive time show on radio) is responsible for achieving impartiality itself and cannot rely on other outlets at different times of day (e.g. the breakfast show) to do so for it. This does not preclude programmes, in specific circumstances, from co-operating to organise joint coverage, thereby achieving due impartiality across the station or channel. But such an arrangement needs clear sign-posting and should normally be referred to the Chief Adviser, Politics.

Programme strands should avoid getting substantially out of kilter in their coverage of parties or candidates. There may be times when inevitably one party dominates the news agenda, but in that case care must be taken to ensure that appropriate coverage is given to other parties or candidates

at appropriate times and there is clear sign-posting, forwards and backwards.

Weekly programmes, or running series within daily sequence programmes, which focus on one party or another, should also signpost both forward and backwards so that it is clear to the audience that due impartiality is built in over time. In these instances, due impartiality should be achieved over the course of the campaign.

The same guidelines as those for programmes will apply to BBC editorial content on all bbc.co.uk sites. These will apply to audio and video content as well as text content, e.g. blogs, podcasts and downloads, as well as any social networking which is associated with the BBC, including material that appears on sites operated by third parties ([see section 6 below](#)).

Editorial Guidelines (4.4.14) say that programme-makers “...should not automatically assume that contributors from other organisations (such as academics, journalists, researchers and representatives of charities) are unbiased and we may need to make it clear to the audience when contributors are associated with a particular viewpoint...”

In the context of the elections, content producers will need to take all reasonable steps to be sure that contributors are appropriately described, and that they have taken account, for instance, of comments made by them on social media, how their organisations are funded and the nature of quoted research or polling. In reporting, in particular, on press coverage of the campaigns and in newspaper reviews, they should also take account of any relevant subjective editorial stance.

Any programme or content giving coverage to any of the elections must achieve due impartiality overall among parties during the course of the whole campaign.

Anyone who is in doubt as to how this applies to their own content should contact the Chief Adviser, Politics, for advice.

4.3 Coverage of other political issues, of Westminster, the devolved bodies, local government and the European Parliament during the Election Period

The elections do not happen in isolation and other elected bodies may well continue their normal activity during the campaign. Content producers need to comply with the general requirement of due accuracy and due impartiality, aware of the possible influence of any other political coverage on the election campaigns.

This applies to all reportage of parliaments and assemblies during the campaigns; some council business will also continue during the election period. These should continue to be covered in the normal way, though any issues relating to any of the elections across the UK which are discussed must be reported with care to maintain due impartiality.

All content producers need to bear in mind which issues are within the remit of the different bodies and ensure it is clear to the audience when stories have a bearing on an election. They also should be alert to other party politicians, including ministers, shadow ministers and other party spokespeople and members of parliaments and assemblies who are not involved directly in the elections, intervening in issues relevant to any of the elections and ensure that due impartiality is maintained. Some members of other elected bodies may also be candidates in these elections; care should be taken to ensure that unfair advantage in the election campaigns is not derived from their other political roles.

Where there are other major news stories, special care is needed to ensure that any political element is covered comprehensively, but also reflects the fact that it is an election period. How this is achieved will depend on the particular circumstances of each case. For example, where there are major stories which fall outside inter-party rivalry, due impartiality may be achieved by allowing more time to those politicians most closely involved, reporting fully statements giving the audience factual information and, on occasion, reflecting vigorous internal debates within parties.

4.4 Order of Parties

The order in which parties appear in packages or are introduced in discussions should normally be editorially driven. However, programme makers should take care to ensure they vary this order, where appropriate, so that no fixed pattern emerges in the course of the campaign. Fairness may sometimes be best achieved – for instance, in debates - simply by drawing straws.

4.5 Items which may not require contributions from other parties or candidates

In exceptional circumstances, comments from candidates can stand alone, without any other political contribution, where to use one might appear insensitive or risk the appearance of a media circus. This might include interviews about a personal tragedy, a public disaster, or where the person concerned is an eye witness to a news incident. Any proposal to use a comment in this way must be referred to a senior editorial figure and the Chief Adviser, Politics.

5 Fairness to Candidates - Code of Practice

5.1 Reports and debates in specific Electoral Areas (Wards/Regions)

The intention of these guidelines is to encourage vigorous debate and to give a higher profile to candidates in general, without giving unfair advantage to one candidate or party over another.

Candidates or parties declining to take part in ward/area reports or debates cannot, by doing so, effectively exercise a veto over such coverage. However, this does not weaken in any way the BBC's obligations of fairness in ensuring the audience is informed of all main strands of argument: further advice should be sought, in such circumstances, from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

Programmes may decide to use either candidates or their representatives in items. But if a candidate is invited to take part, the other participants should, where at all possible, also be candidates (see below 5.3 Welsh and Gaelic Language Services). In exceptional circumstances, if a candidate is genuinely unavailable, the opportunity may be offered instead to a suitable party representative or substitute (e.g. party official or agent) but it should normally be made clear to the audience that the missing candidate was invited and why they were unable to take part. If a party or candidate declines to put forward a representative or nominates someone in a way which risks unfairness to other candidates, the item/programme may go ahead without them.

Reports or debates about a specific electoral area, such as a council ward, should give due weight to candidates who have demonstrated substantial electoral support in that area (either through their own candidacy, for instance, as independents, or from support for their party). This means that if any candidate takes part in an item about a specific electoral area, then these other candidates should also be offered the opportunity to take part, or be given a similar opportunity across a series of reports.

Candidates or parties who have not demonstrated that they have substantial electoral support in that area must still be offered proportionate coverage. How that is achieved will be a matter for editorial judgment, but the following should be regarded as a minimum:

Short reports and items, including those online, which refer to only some of the candidates in an electoral area (or areas) should also refer to an online list of all candidates and parties standing (or, if before close of nominations, to a list of candidates so far). If such a report is being broadcast several times on the same channel or station, the online list of candidates should be referred to on each occasion and at least once the list should feature visually and/or verbally.

For longer items or programmes, such as debates - if not all the candidates are taking part - (or where there is no online list available for the relevant electoral area), then the candidates should be listed, visually and/or verbally, in addition to any reference to a full online list of candidates.

Content producers must ensure generally that candidates are not given an unfair advantage; for instance, camera operators should take care where a candidate's name is featured prominently through depicting posters or rosettes etc.

Where candidates have other roles – political or non-political - care should be taken to ensure that they do not gain an unfair advantage in the election campaign over other candidates. Before the close of nominations, content producers need to ensure due impartiality in regard to any contributor who is expected to stand as a candidate.

5.2 Use of Candidates in issue based packages, wider debates and phone-ins

As well as debates or other items using candidates within wards, all types of content may use an appropriate range of candidates from different wards or electoral areas to discuss together election issues. There may also be circumstances in which it is appropriate to use both candidates and non-candidates (for instance, where a party spokesperson is not standing, or for debates between party leaders.)

Reasonable references to local examples within a ward, for instance, to local hospitals, schools, examples of crime, etc, are allowed, providing it does not result in any unfairness to a candidate who is not taking part.

In order to maintain due impartiality, the choice of candidates or parties represented should be appropriate to the item. Who takes part and in what format, for instance, in debates, is a matter for editorial judgement, so long as that is exercised with due impartiality in the specific context of the election period. The choice of individual to represent a party will be made on editorial grounds, but care must be taken over the course of the campaign to ensure that one candidate is not unduly favoured at the expense of others.

A candidate taking part as a national spokesperson should not gain an unfair advantage over other candidates while discussing issues directly relevant to their electoral area. This may mean advising them in advance of the BBC's due impartiality obligations, or swift intervention by the presenter of a live programme, or editing before broadcast, as necessary.

Candidates may be encouraged to take part in phone-ins about the election or election issues. However, callers must be checked to see if they are candidates and it must be clear to the audience that they are speaking not as ordinary members of the public but as contributors with a political agenda. Care must be taken that over time programmes are not giving undue prominence to one party or undue preference to one candidate over others in the same electoral area. Care should also be taken – and advice sought - with regard to any contribution from a candidate during a phone-in or similar programme which is not about the elections or political issues more generally.

Further advice on use of candidates can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

5.3 Welsh and Gaelic Language Services

Some politicians in Wales are not Welsh language speakers. In the event that a candidate is not a Welsh speaker, Radio Cymru and BBC Wales programmes for S4C may draw on both candidates and other party representatives or appropriate substitutes, including in programmes about specific electoral areas.

Few politicians are Gaelic speakers. In the event that a party is unable to find a Gaelic speaking candidate, BBC Radio nan Gàidheal and BBC Alba programmes may draw on both candidates and other party representatives or appropriate substitutes, including in programmes about specific electoral areas.

6 Online, Social Media and Audience Contributions

The same guidelines as those for programmes will apply to BBC editorial content on all bbc.co.uk sites. These will apply to audio and video content as well as text content, e.g. blogs, podcasts and downloads, as well as any social media identified with the BBC, including material that appears on sites operated by third parties.

6.1 Use of Social Media

BBC editorial staff and anyone involved in producing election-related content must avoid compromising the BBC's impartiality or bringing the BBC into disrepute by their activities, for instance, by expressing their own views (or endorsing the views of others) on political matters, either on personal websites or social media.

6.2 Audience contributions

Audience contributions offer immediacy and interactivity to the BBC's output both broadcast and on the web. These contributions are an expression of opinion and are not an indication of the weight of opinion on one side or another of a question. The range selected for inclusion must be chosen to achieve due impartiality, not just by the weight of audience activity. However, we must not seek to achieve what might be considered "artificial" balance by giving a misleading account of the weight of opinion, particularly on social media where the activity of a relatively small number of people can create a disproportionate impression.

Audience contributions may come by text, social media message or email, or some other interactivity mechanism, including "vox pop". They may be unsolicited, or they may arise from calls to action, in either broadcast output or online or through social media. It should always be made clear that vox pops or comment taken from social media sites are an expression of an argument not an indication of the weight of opinion on either side. Care must therefore be taken over where vox pops are recorded or where the social media comment originally appeared as well as how they are edited to ensure an appropriate range of views is reflected.

However we receive them, content producers should be rigorous about establishing the origins of materials offered as audience contributions and

take responsibility for their authenticity. It may be necessary to verify that a contribution apparently from an individual in the public eye is genuine. Where such contributions come from candidates, that must be clearly identified.

All online debate on the election, whether on bbc.co.uk or BBC branded social media accounts will be appropriately moderated and filtered. Those parts of the BBC's online presence which do not normally engage in political issues should seek advice from the Chief Adviser, Politics, before doing so.

Content producers should be alert to organised campaigns or lobbying by parties, pressure groups, candidates or people acting on their behalf, particularly on social media platforms. If organised lobbying is suspected during the Election Period, contributors may be asked to provide contact details for verification purposes. Careful consideration should be given to the editorial impact of such lobbying and whether the bbc.co.uk escalation strategy should be activated; it may be necessary, for example, to put a message board into pre-moderation or read only mode.

Journalists and moderators will have to make fine judgements between remarks that constitute robust debate and personal abuse. The general rule of thumb should be if we would not normally broadcast it on radio or TV, it should not be online or on BBC branded social media accounts. Filters for harm and offence and personal abuse will operate as usual, but they should not be relied on as a substitute for effective moderation.

Non-news sites should normally direct users who want to discuss the election in message boards or comments to appropriate areas of the news site such as political blogs or relevant news articles.

6.3 Voting

During the Election Period, the BBC will not broadcast or publish numbers of contributions received on any campaign issue to estimate support for any side or party. There will be no online votes attempting to quantify support for a campaign, party, politician or policy issue during the Election Period, nor should other quantitative methods, such as a count of the number of texts or social media contributions, be used to assess the level of support.

Producers must ensure that text votes are not translated into anything that could be construed either as a representation of public opinion as a whole, or the BBC's opinion. Any proposal to conduct text voting on any political issue that could have a bearing on the elections must be discussed with the Chief Adviser, Politics, as well as being referred to the relevant departmental senior editorial figure and ITACU.

6.4 Audience Programmes, including Debates

Any programme, or set of programmes (e.g. organised across local radio or regional TV) covering elections and planning to use a live audience should consult the Chief Adviser Politics to discuss the selection of the audience and how to achieve due impartiality. All such procedures must stand up to public scrutiny.

There is no single way to assemble an audience for these sorts of programmes. Producers will need to take account of many different factors, such as the format – e.g. the role of the audience, the make-up of the panel, the geographical area, etc. What is most important is that – editorially – each and every programme has made a carefully considered judgement about fairness and impartiality in those particular circumstances.

6.5 Material from parties or candidates

BBC News Online will not normally link directly to election-related material on the websites either of political parties or individual candidates, unless there is an editorial justification (e.g. a row caused by a prominent figure publishing policy on his/her website contradicting the manifesto on the party's website) and then it will be promoted only for a limited period and mindful of any impartiality issues.

BBC News Online will list links to all available party sites, provided that it does not give strong grounds for concern that this breaches the [BBC Harm and Offence guidelines](#) or the law e.g. defamation or incitement to racial hatred.

Any speeches or other material published or contributed by candidates or parties which are carried in full or in part must be selected on news value, while bearing in mind that due impartiality requires that an appropriate range of such material is carried.

7 Polls and other tests of opinion

Section 7 of the Election Guidelines should, where appropriate, be read in conjunction with Chapter 10 of Editorial Guidelines and the Editorial Policy Guidance "[Opinion Polls, Surveys, Questionnaires, Votes, Straw Polls](#)", available on the Editorial Policy website.

7.1 Reporting Polls

During the campaign our reporting of opinion polls should take into account three key factors:

- they are part of the story of the campaign and audiences should, where appropriate, be informed about them;
- context is essential, and we must ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the language used in reporting them;
- polls can be wrong - there are real dangers in only reporting the most "newsworthy" polls – i.e. those which, on a one-off basis, show dramatic movement. Even apparently consistent trends may be wrong or failing to tell the whole story of what is happening

So, the general rules and guidance applying to the reporting of polls need to be strictly applied during election campaigns. They are:

- not to lead a news bulletin or programme simply with the results of an opinion poll (especially a single voting intention poll);
- not to headline, on broadcast output, the results of a single voting intention poll unless it has prompted a story which itself deserves a headline and reference to the poll's findings is necessary to make sense of it;
- not to rely on the interpretation given to a poll's results by the organisation or publication which commissioned it, but to come to our own view by looking at the questions, the results and the trend;
- to report the findings of voting intentions polls in the context of trend. The trend may consist of the results of all major polls over a period or may be limited to the change in a single pollster's findings. Poll results which defy trends without convincing explanation should be treated with particular scepticism and caution;
- not to use language which gives greater credibility to the polls than they deserve: polls "suggest" but never "prove" or even "show"; it is important that other editorial judgements – eg which aspects of the election may be given more coverage – do not rely too heavily on what the polls may appear to be indicating.
- to report the expected margin of error if the gap between the contenders is within the margin. On television and online, graphics should *always* show the margin of error;
- to report the organisation which carried out the poll and the organisation or publication which commissioned it;

Particular care should be taken with newspaper reviews; polling alone should not normally be the lead item in a newspaper review and should always be reported with a sentence of context (e.g: "that's rather out of line with other polls this week").

No opinion poll on any subject relating to politics or the elections may be published on polling day (from 00.30) until after the polls have closed.

7.2 Commissioning Polls

The BBC does not commission voting intention opinion polls during election periods. Editorial Guidelines say "any proposal to commission an opinion poll on politics or any other matter of public policy for any BBC service must be referred to the Chief Adviser Politics for approval".

Care must be taken to ensure that any poll commissioned by the BBC is not used to suggest a BBC view on a particular policy or issue. A poll may be commissioned to help inform the audience's understanding of a current controversy, but it should not be used to imply BBC intervention in a current controversy.

8 Party Leader Interviews

The BBC's Editorial Guidelines set out that any proposal to interview or profile the main party leaders in the UK must be referred in advance to the Chief Adviser, Politics. The Guidelines also say that for BBC Scotland, BBC Wales and BBC Northern Ireland, referral should also be made to the relevant Head of News and Current Affairs with regard to party leaders in the nations. Offers of such interviews from the parties must also be referred before any can be accepted. This mandatory reference is particularly important during these election campaigns.

9 Polling Day

There will be no coverage of any of the election campaigns on polling day, from 00.30 until polls close at 22.00 on TV, radio, bbc.co.uk or our official channels on social media and other websites. Online sites will not have to remove archive reports.

Particular care should also be taken in personal use of social media on polling day.

Coverage on the day will be restricted to factual accounts with nothing which could be construed as influencing the ballots.

No opinion poll on any issue relating to politics or the election may be published until after the polls have closed.

Whilst the polls are open, it is a criminal offence to publish anything about the way in which people have voted in the elections.

10 Complaints

Complaints will be handled at the appropriate level from programme editors upwards. The aim is to ensure that whether a complaint has come via BBC Audience Services, direct to a programme or to a correspondent or individual journalist, from a politician or member of the public (who may or may not be a political activist), from a senior party official or an individual candidate, the BBC's response is consistent, robust and swift.

For that reason, normally, on receiving a formal complaint, details should be taken and referred to the appropriate person before any initial response – other than acknowledgement and timescale – is given to the complainant.

Anyone requiring further advice on the application of these Guidelines should consult the Chief Adviser Politics.

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Appendices – Guidance on Coverage of Parties and Candidates

Each section is specific to output in the relevant nation or region – all sections apply to all UK-wide output, except where stated.

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Introduction

Deciding respective levels of coverage for different candidates in elections, who have varying levels of political support, requires, primarily, good and impartial editorial judgement. There will be legitimate differences in interpretation and application for different programmes and formats. The following guidance is aimed at ensuring there are appropriate levels of coverage, with some minimum level for smaller parties and independent candidates – it does not set any maximum. Advice is available, on a case by case basis, from the Chief Adviser, Politics, both before and throughout the campaign.

So although each outlet must ensure its coverage is proportionate with regard to parties and candidates, that should be treated as a guide rather than as a set mathematical formula. However, there must be good editorial reasons for any significant variation and these cannot supersede the over-riding obligation for due impartiality and fairness.

The relative amount of coverage given to political parties and independent candidates in each electoral area (for instance, across a nation or within an individual council or ward) should reflect levels of past and/or current electoral support in that electoral area. In considering this, bearing in mind the location of the intended audience, although performance at the last equivalent election in terms of representation and share of the vote is taken as the starting point, the following factors must also be given due weight:

- performance in subsequent elections, where relevant
- other relevant evidence of current electoral support
- the number of candidates a party fields in the election
- other relevant editorial issues, such as electoral pacts, new parties, coalition agreements etc.

This Guidance will remain open to amendment due to any new relevant evidence of current political support until the day after the close of nominations.

Appendix 1 Scotland

Please note: The Election Period in Scotland begins on Wednesday 22nd March - before the Election Period for other elections in the UK on 4th May.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN SCOTLAND

A1.1 The Elections

There will be polling on 4th May, 2017 across Scotland, for elections in all 32 unitary authorities using the Single Transferable Vote system. There are a total

of 1,227 seats being contested across 353 wards. The Election Period in Scotland begins on 22nd March 2017.

A1.2 Coverage

This Appendix applies to content intended for broadcast in Scotland (including UK-wide and online material) when there is any coverage of the Scottish local elections: as a whole, of an individual council or ward or a group of councils or wards.

A1.3 Larger Parties in Scotland

Parties which gained substantial levels of electoral support in Scotland at the 2012 local elections were:

The SNP, Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

Taking account of this and levels of electoral support over a series of different types of elections, these parties (if they stand candidates in at least one sixth of the wards being contested) should receive broadly similar levels of coverage where it is directly related to the 2017 Scottish local government elections.

A1.4 Smaller Parties in Scotland

The Scottish Green Party, in demonstrating some electoral support in subsequent elections, will normally receive coverage on BBC Scotland proportionate to the larger parties and more than those parties with less evidence of electoral support.

All parties fielding candidates in at least one-sixth of the wards being contested in Scotland (59 from a total of 353) will have – as a minimum – their manifesto/election launch (or equivalent event) covered on appropriate TV and radio news current affairs programmes and online on BBC Scotland.

If other programmes choose to cover the elections, they must be consistent and treat parties reaching this threshold in a proportionate way.

Parties standing candidates in less than one-sixth of the wards in Scotland, but which are running serious campaigns, should also receive some coverage during the election period on BBC Scotland.

In deciding what coverage is appropriate for each of the Smaller Parties, as well as bearing in mind how the electorate voted in the 2012 elections and at subsequent different elections, output areas should also take note of evidence of current electoral support, such as a consistent trend in opinion polls, as well as relevant political circumstances. Additional coverage should be considered when programmes focus on issues where smaller parties have a distinctive point of view.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a likelihood of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any

one or more of the smaller parties to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

The principles applied to coverage of the Smaller Parties at a Scotland- wide level should also be applied in any programme items which are based on a particular region or council area. The relative strengths of the parties will vary and again advice can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

A1.5 Independents

Independent candidates attract significant levels of support in some Scottish local elections. The audience will expect that to be reflected in relevant coverage. Independent candidates should be given proportionate coverage (up to similar levels to the larger parties in some wards or councils), where they have demonstrated:

- significant previous electoral support (eg are incumbents)
- there is evidence of significant current electoral support.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a likelihood of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any one or more independent candidates to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

Relevant output should also take into account the political context in which candidates are standing: for instance, where an independent candidate subscribes to a political party, or where a group of independents are acting together, whether or not on a common manifesto; the objective will be to ensure the audience is given clear and accurate information and that due weight is applied to the various political perspectives.

The audience will be referred, as appropriate, to the full list of parties and independent candidates standing on BBC News Online Scotland.

Further advice on coverage of smaller parties and independents can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

Appendix 2 Wales

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN WALES

A2.1 The Elections

There will be polling on 4th May 2017 across Wales, for elections in all 22 unitary authorities using “First Past the Post” system. There are a total of 1,254 seats being contested. The Election Period in Wales begins on 27th March 2017.

A2.2 Coverage

This Appendix applies to content intended for broadcast in Wales (including UK-wide and online material) when there is any coverage of the Welsh local government elections: as a whole, of an individual council or ward or a group of

councils or wards.

A2.3 Larger Parties in Wales

Parties which gained substantial levels of electoral support in Wales at the 2012 local elections were:

Labour, Plaid Cymru, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

At subsequent elections in Wales, UKIP have also gained substantial levels of electoral support.

Taking account of this and levels of electoral support over a series of different types of elections, these five parties (if they stand candidates in at least one-sixth of the total seats being contested) should receive broadly similar levels of coverage where it is directly related to the 2017 Welsh local government elections.

A2.4 Smaller Parties in Wales

All parties fielding candidates in at least one-sixth of the seats available in Wales (209) will have – as a minimum – their manifesto/election launch (or equivalent event) covered on appropriate TV and radio news current affairs programmes and online on BBC Wales.

If other programmes choose to cover the elections, they must be consistent and treat parties reaching this threshold in a proportionate way.

Parties standing candidates in less than one-sixth of the seats in Wales, but which are running serious campaigns, should also receive some coverage during the election period on BBC Wales.

In deciding what coverage is appropriate for each of the Smaller Parties, as well as bearing in mind how the electorate voted in the 2012 elections and at subsequent different elections, output areas should also take note of evidence of current electoral support, such as a consistent trend in opinion polls, as well as relevant political circumstances. Additional coverage should be considered when programmes focus on issues where smaller parties have a distinctive point of view.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a likelihood of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any one or more of the smaller parties to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

The principles applied to coverage of the Smaller Parties at a Wales - wide level should also be applied in any programme items which are based on a particular region or council area. The relative strengths of the parties will vary and again advice can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

A2.5 Independents

Independent candidates attract significant levels of support in some Welsh local government elections. The audience will expect that to be reflected in relevant coverage. Independent candidates should be given proportionate coverage (up to similar levels to the larger parties in some wards or councils), where they have demonstrated:

- significant previous electoral support (eg are incumbents)
- there is evidence of significant current electoral support.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a likelihood of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any one or more independent candidates to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

Relevant output should also take into account the political context in which candidates are standing: for instance, where an independent candidate subscribes to a political party, or where a group of independents are acting together, whether or not on a common manifesto; the objective will be to ensure the audience is given clear and accurate information and that due weight is applied to the various political perspectives.

The audience will be referred, as appropriate, to the full list of parties and independent candidates standing on BBC News Online Wales.

Further advice on coverage of smaller parties and independents can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

Appendix 3 Local Government in parts of England (excluding CLA mayoral elections)

A3.1 The Elections

In England elections using “First Past the Post”, take place in:

- all 27 County Councils (1,787 seats contested)
- 6 Unitary authorities (528 seats contested)
- 1 Metropolitan borough (Doncaster – 55 seats contested)

There are a total of 2370* seats being contested in England.
Plus 2 District Mayoral elections (Doncaster and North Tyneside)

A3.2 Coverage

This Appendix applies to content intended for broadcast where elections are

taking place in England (including UK-wide and online material) when there is any coverage of the English local government elections: as a whole, of an individual council or ward or a group of councils or wards.

Content producers should take care to ensure that coverage of the local government elections does not cause any unfairness to candidates in mayoral elections in the same broadcast area (see Appendix 4): there must be due impartiality with regard to both sorts of elections.

A3.3 Larger Parties in England

Parties with substantial levels of electoral support at local government level in England are:

Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP.

Taking account of this and levels of electoral support over a series of different types of elections, these parties should receive broadly similar levels of coverage where it is directly related to the 2017 English local government elections.

A3.4 Smaller Parties in England

In deciding what coverage is appropriate for each of the Smaller Parties, as well as bearing in mind how the electorate voted in the 2013 elections and at subsequent different elections, we should also take note of evidence of current electoral support, such as a robust and consistent trend in opinion polls, as well as relevant political circumstances. Additional coverage should be considered when programmes focus on issues where smaller parties have a distinctive point of view.

The Green Party, in demonstrating some electoral support at local elections, will normally receive coverage proportionate to the larger parties and more than those parties with less evidence of past or current electoral support or fewer candidates.

All parties fielding candidates in at least one-sixth of the seats available in England (i.e. 395* candidates in 2370* seats) should also receive some proportionate network coverage where the local elections are covered, including online.

Local and regional programmes covering elections should take account of any different patterns of past and/or current electoral support in their area.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a possibility of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any one or more of the smaller parties to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

A3.5 Independents

Independent candidates attract significant levels of support in many local

elections and the audience will expect that to be reflected in relevant coverage. Independent candidates should be given proportionate coverage (up to similar levels to the larger parties in some wards or councils), where they have demonstrated:

- significant previous electoral support (e.g. are incumbents)
- there is evidence of significant current electoral support.

In addition there will be circumstances in which there is a possibility of No Overall Control within a council, meaning it will be editorially appropriate for any one or more independent candidates to receive more coverage, for instance, in the context of “coalition-building”.

Relevant output should also take into account the political context in which candidates are standing: for instance, where an independent candidate indicates some support for a political party, or where a group of independents are acting together, whether or not on a common manifesto; the objective will be to ensure the audience is given clear and accurate information and that due weight is applied to the various political perspectives.

The audience will be referred, as appropriate and where possible, to a full list of parties and independent candidates standing, for instance, on council websites or specifically published on BBC News Online.

Further advice on coverage of smaller parties and independents can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.

- * to be confirmed

Appendix 4 Combined Local Authority Mayoral elections

A4.1 The Elections

“Combined local authority” elections are taking place in six regions, using the Supplementary Vote system:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Greater Manchester
Liverpool City Region
Tees Valley
West Midlands
West of England

A4.2 Coverage

This Appendix applies to content intended for broadcast in England (including UK-wide and online material) when there is any coverage of the six CLA Mayoral elections: as a whole, of an individual region/area or a group of regions/areas.

A4.3 Parties and Candidates

Mayoral elections are not necessarily contested in the same way as other elections; for instance, independent candidates may be more prominent; a high deposit can limit the number of candidates; they are more likely to be contested on local issues – without national manifestos.

In assessing differing levels of coverage between candidates, therefore, the weight given to different types of past elections in the same areas is likely to be limited, especially as this is the first time these elections have been contested. Insofar as there is evidence of “current electoral support” in opinion polls, these are also likely to be of limited use for individual regions/areas.

In each region, therefore, content producers will take account of “past electoral support” – ie other elections held and who contested them. But they will also have regard for the nature of mayoral elections, the number of candidates and the different patterns of electoral support, for instance, as between party and independent candidates (for that reason, there is no difference between the guidance for party and independent candidates).

Content producers may take account of robust and objective evidence of “current electoral support” and of any relevant political circumstances in making judgements about relative levels of coverage. The sort of circumstances where candidates might receive less coverage could be, for instance, where they have not launched a manifesto or have not set out policies specifically on issues relevant to the mayor’s powers, or where they are campaigning, for instance, on a single issue, or intending to attract attention to a particular cause or commercial enterprise, rather than with a serious intention of being elected. However, this should be a tough test; specific advice is available from the Chief Adviser Politics.

Otherwise, candidates in the same region or area can normally expect similar (not necessarily identical) levels of coverage to each other across the election period as a whole in items about that election.

Regional and local stations or programmes covering more than one mayoral election must ensure due impartiality in each (ie take care that coverage of parties or candidates in one election does not create any unfairness towards parties or candidates in another election within the same broadcast area).

Content producers should also take care to ensure that coverage of the mayoral elections does not cause any unfairness to candidates in local government elections (see Appendix 3): there must be due impartiality with regard to both sorts of elections.

In network programmes which contain items covering the mayoral elections in general, care must be taken to ensure that the inclusion of contributors

from parties which are standing candidates in many or all the regions does not cause unfairness to other candidates (e.g. independents) standing individually in a region.

Due impartiality, in each mayoral election, should normally be achieved in each programme during the campaign, or across the programme strand. It may be achieved across the whole coverage of a channel or station, but there must then be clear and prominent sign-posting, appropriate references to full website details and due regard given to ensuring fairness (for instance, appropriate scheduling of interviews at different times of the day).

The audience will be referred, as appropriate, to the full list of parties and independent candidates standing on BBC News Online.

Further advice on coverage of parties and independents in the CLA elections can be sought from the Chief Adviser, Politics.