

- Party Politics have no place in local government
- Your Interest is My/Our Interest

Whatever you do, remember to keep repeating your name as often as possible so that people remember it when they are in the voting booth.

## 9 About the LGA Independent Group

The LGA Independent Group is one of the four political groups of the LGA representing all the Independent Councillors in England and Wales. We receive funding from the LGA proportional to the number of Independent Councillors. In 1999 a small number of Independent seats were lost. Independents need to regain ground in this forthcoming election to be entitled to a larger budget and a greater say through Executives, panels and task group places on the LGA. This will be even more important as the balance of power between the other three parties in the LGA is likely to shift after the elections.

The LGA Independent Group can be contacted at:

Local Government House  
Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ  
Tel: 020 7664 3206/3224  
Fax: 020 7664 3323  
Email: independent.group@lga.gov.uk

## 10 Conclusion

We hope you have found this information useful.

**FOLLOW THE 5 Ps - Get ahead of your opponents! We wish you success!**

*These 'Handy Hints' are not prescriptive. Refer to the 'Candidates Guide' given to you by your Returning Officer. The Returning Officer will provide clarification on any issue if it is required.*

### Election Day Checklist

- Do you have a car going round with your posters and a loud speaker?
- Is someone helping your known supporters who have mobility problems to get to the polling station?
- Are there posters in the houses on the way to the Polling Station?
- Do you have supporters at the polling station wearing rosettes?

**Remember:** Tellers at polling stations must remain outside of the area where voting is taking place. You will be advised where you may sit - you **must not** speak to voters as they arrive, you can ask for their polling number as they leave, but do not ask them how they voted.

**You should not have the name of the candidate on rosettes worn by Tellers at Polling Stations.**

\* From Local Government Chronicle map 1999.



Local Government Association

# Handy Hints For Independent Candidates Standing for Local Government Elections in England and Wales

## Introduction

This document has been produced to assist Independent candidates standing in local elections. For those of you who are fighting an election for the first time, (and indeed those who are already experienced Councillors), we hope that this guide gives you a good idea of how much you need to do without putting you off.

We wish all Independent candidates success in their campaigns.

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## 1 Plan Your Campaign

There are a lot of things that you will need to do if you are to be successful in being elected as an Independent Councillor. **Leave nothing to chance.** Plan ahead in plenty of time. Not having a Party machine behind you means you need to be very organised. Do not think that you can leave anything to the last moment.

Remember the 5 Ps - **Proper**

**Planning**

**Prevents**

**Poor**

**Performance.**

One way to do this is to have a count-down timetable. Key dates are given in the timetable appended to this booklet.

To win an election you need to:

- **Register as a Candidate**
- **Register an Election Agent** (or yourself as Agent)
- **Find supporters** prepared to help with campaigning
- **Plan out how many leaflets and other election materials you are going to produce and when** (remember to think about distribution too)
- **Think about other ways of getting your message out** (including using the local media - i.e. radio and newspapers)

6 **Keep it short** - the rest of the text should simply expand on or support the point of the first paragraph. Quotes are always good. If you are publicising an event that you want people to come to, put the full details here of time, place and who to contact. These paragraphs should expand on why the story is interesting.

7 **Keep to one page** - unless it really cannot be done, but never go over two.

8 **Only one story** - if there are a number of things that you want to publicise, do separate press releases. This means they can be given to different reporters to cover. Also, if there are two or more stories in one press release, only one is likely to get covered.

9 **Contact details** - at the end put notes to the Editor about who to contact to find out more information. Make sure that whoever you put is actually going to be around in case journalists ring, not on holiday or out all week at meetings.

10 **Remember to mention that you are Independent.**

Remember to be: • **Interesting** • **Clear** • **Succinct** • **Brief**

Remember that once you have registered as a candidate you are entitled to equal air time with any other candidate and fair coverage in the newspapers. Make sure the relevant journalists know who you are and to contact you for comment if they are covering any particular issue. It goes without saying that you need to be keeping abreast of what the local papers and radio are saying. Perhaps you have supporters who are prepared to write letters to the papers or ring up the radio. This is more effective around local interest issues rather than just declaring support.

For further advice about dealing with the media, see "Don't Panic - making the most of media interviews"(copies available from Paul Ogden at LGA Independent Group Office).

## 8 What to Say in Your Election Literature

There are many strong points in your favour. Make the most of the fact that you are an **Independent candidate**, which means you are free from Party Politics and your only interest is the local community. Independent Councillors are free to speak and vote in the interests of local people and only local people. You do not receive instructions from a Central Office, which is often remote from your area, and you are free to vote and speak in the interests of your residents without having to follow a Party line.

Make sure you are covering issues which are of interest to your local community.

Although Independent candidates are not involved in PARTY POLITICS we are involved in POLITICS. Tell the electors what you believe requires improving, the issues you want addressed and what you are going to do to improve the situation.

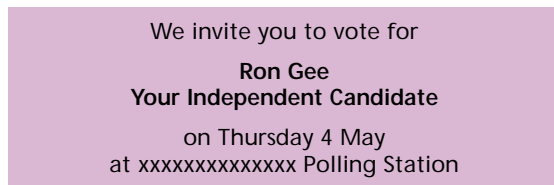
Explain that national Party Politics should not be part of local problems and you do not agree with decisions being made behind closed doors.

Tell the electors that 10% of the total number of councillors in England and Wales are currently Independent and 13 Councils\* are Independent Controlled.

Slogans:

- Your Vote Will Count
- For an efficient and effective council, vote for your Independent Candidate
- Vote for your Residents Association Candidate

It should have your name on it, for example:



On the reverse side hand-write the electors name and address, so it has the personal feel. You will require volunteer writers for this, but it can be done early from the electoral register.

- **Posters**

We tend to have black and white A3 (297 x 420 mm) posters with the message:

Vote  
 <Name>  
 Independent Candidate

We also produce a small number of A5 posters with the same layout to put in car windows. Posters are to get the name of the candidate lodged in the brain of the voter. **Houses Near Polling Stations** - Any supporters with houses near the polling stations are particularly useful for getting the message to people on their way to vote.

**Car on Election Day** - Three A3 posters fixed onto wooden boards in a triangle and mounted onto a roof rack are also very effective if driven about each evening for two weeks prior to polling day, and all day on the day of the election.

## 7 Make Sure the Electorate Know You

Leaflets and posters are not the only way to get your message across. Make sure you use the local media. **Send a good picture of yourself with brief details to all local papers.** Remember to write your name on the back of the photo, in case it becomes detached, and if you have a number of pictures to choose from ask for a second opinion on which one you look best - it is hard to judge this yourself.

### Ten points to remember when writing a Press Release

- 1 Put the words "**PRESS RELEASE**" at the top.
- 2 Put **the date** that you will be sending it out (journalists will ignore old news - ie Press Releases with dates which have passed a long time ago).
- 3 **Title** - put a title like a headline in a newspaper, as exciting and interesting as possible, to grab the attention of the editor and make them want to read more and print something. (It is unlikely, though, that the title you put will be used as a headline, because the headlines are put on later by the sub-editors who will not have seen your press release).
- 4 **First paragraph** - this needs to have the main point of your press release. Who, where, when, why, how? Why is it interesting and newsworthy?.
- 5 **Double-space** - always type a press release in double-spaced or 11/2 (ie gaps between the lines of text). This is because editors like to scribble notes and mark up which bits they want to use.

- **Keep a record of all your election expenses (very important see pages 3&4)** - it is advisable to arrange for your Election Agent to approve and pay all expenses incurred during your election campaign.

## 2 Register as a Candidate

Contact the Returning Officer at your Local Authority for the registration forms and guidance for candidates.

A common mistake first time candidates make is to hand their registration form in on the deadline day. This is not a good idea, because if any part of the form is incorrectly filled out, it will be returned and then there is not enough time to submit a correct form before the deadline. We always advise people to **return their nomination forms AT LEAST 7 DAYS BEFORE THE DEADLINE DATE** to allow for this.

## 3 Gather Support

### Your Election Agent

You need to register an Agent. You can be your own Agent, but if you can find someone who is good at organising and is prepared to assist you, it will make life easier. The Agent is the person who will do things like making sure the printing is done at the right time and delivered to the right place, sort out rotas for canvassing, keeps a record of money spent on the campaign (see section 4 - Decide Your Budget) and works with you to plan your campaign.

### Remember

Your Agent's name and address, along with the printer's name and address, **must appear on all election literature.**

### Canvassing and Delivering Literature

It will also make life easier if you have some helpers who are willing to deliver leaflets, canvas on your behalf, put up posters in their windows, etc. You will need to plan out how much canvassing and leaflet delivering you are going to do according to how many helpers you have and how much time they are prepared to 'donate'. It would be as well to ask people to let you know in advance what days/evenings they would be free, from what time and for how long. Then you or your Agent can draw up a timetable of what you will ask each person to do.

For canvassing, it is best not to start too early, because people forget who you are or what was said by the time polling day arrives. 3 to 4 weeks before polling day is usually enough. The point of canvassing is for people to see you are making a serious effort and for them to know who you are.

Candidates and canvassers can wear black and white rosettes with the candidates name on stickers in the centre. If you want any rosettes, these can be purchased from Haines Rossette Company on 01932 829295 (allow 3 weeks delivery).

It is as well to keep what is said on the doorstep very short and simple, otherwise you will never get round everyone. It is also a good idea not to ask people what they are going to vote, since they are rarely honest, and can object to you asking them. Instead you can say something like:

"I am your Independent candidate, <name>..." or "I am calling on behalf of your Independent candidate, <name>..."

"...and I hope you will vote for me/him/her on 6th May"

If people do want to get involved in long conversations, say that you (or the candidate) will call back at another time. If a lot of people are raising the same issues, you can address these in a leaflet (see section 7 - "Your Questions Answered"). Calling cards are also useful for people who are out to show that you have been round.

## 4 Decide Your Budget

If you are being supported by a Residents' or Ratepayers' Association, they may have a fund from which they are prepared to draw. Otherwise, if you are serious about standing, you will have to decide how much of your own money you are able to use.

Remember that there is also a limit on how much you are allowed to spend. This amount will be given in the guidance notes that you receive from your returning officer, and is based on a fixed sum plus an amount proportional to the electorate in the ward.

Also remember that you need to keep a record of and receipts for all your election-related expenses, even if things have been given to you 'in kind'. Common things will include:

- If you have access to a duplicator or photocopier free of charge, put down the cost of the paper.
- If you know someone who is prepared to do printing at cost or for nothing, put down the price of at least the paper, or get them to give you a written receipt for what the printing would have cost if they had charged you (even though they have not).
- Put down the cost for telephone calls and postage (even though it is difficult to prove what telephone calls are related to the election). If you do not put anything, it will be challenged, since you are bound to make some.
- Put down the total cost of petrol used during your election campaign - for example, collecting printing, etc. However, on polling day you can use as many cars as you like, provided you do not make any payment to the driver/owner.

## 5 Printing Advice

If you have never dealt with commercial printers before, make sure you allow plenty of time to sort out what you want. Prices will vary according to what type of paper, how many folds, how many you want printed and the quality of the artwork you supply. You can supply a very good copy (camera-ready) which can be copied direct, or you can supply all the text on a computer disc (if you make sure what sort of file the printer can use) and give them a photo to scan. You can alternatively give them a rough draft of the text and they will do the layout for you.

**If you are doing your own art work on a computer, it is a good idea to get someone else to proof read it before sending it to a printer.** And a second opinion on photos of yourself is sensible too - it is hard to be objective about yourself.

Speak to a few printers and find out what the options are and how they affect the cost. Usually setting up the artwork and making printing plates or equivalent are the largest parts of the cost and the difference between printing, say 2,000 and 3,000, will be marginal.

## 6 What Election Literature Do You Require?

To keep within the limit that you are allowed to spend during the election campaign you need to be careful with your printing costs. These will be affected by how much material you produce, but can be minimised by shopping around, as mentioned above. How much you produce depends not only on your budget, but also your helpers. As obvious as it may seem, the more paper to deliver, the more helpers you require. Having said that, we believe in lots of paper during an election campaign provided the cost is kept within limits. For a full campaign, we suggest:

### • Election Introduction

At the start of your campaign a single A5 sheet (147 x 210 mm) advising residents about the election and that you will be standing as the **Independent** candidate. This should include a few details about who you are and your reasons for standing, but keep it simple, not too many words at this stage. This should be distributed as soon as you have registered as a candidate.

### • Main Election Address

This needs to be distributed about 2 weeks before Polling day. There are various styles that can be used. An A4 sheet either folded in half or in thirds is popular. Cost of printing will relate to the type of paper, use of colour and the quality of artwork provided to the printer. Always order 200-300 spare copies and give them away freely. You will be able to write something to suit your style and area, but your main election address should include:

- A good photograph of yourself
- Details of your background
- What your views are on how your council operates and what you would like to do if (when) you are elected
- Your name and your 'description' on both outside covers, so it shows which ever way it falls on the doorstep - also repeat it on the inside to remind people
- Your Agent's and Printer's name and address

### • Your Questions Answered

A device we have always found very useful is a final A4 sheet (210 x 297 mm) produced and delivered as close to the election day as possible but not on it (that's too late), printed on one side only. This addresses any criticisms that have been made in the media, counters any negative points made by opposition candidates, corrects misinformation or answers questions raised on the doorstep during canvassing.

Also make sure that you answer any articles in your local papers with a letter or a Press Release. Do not ignore articles which appear to be detrimental to Independent candidates.

### • Invitation to Vote Card

If funds and time allow, another tool we have successfully used is to deliver an "Invitation to Vote Card". This is a hand addressed invitation to each individual, using information from the Register of Electors in your Ward. We print these on a buff coloured card so that it is not confused with the Polling card, and make it look like an invitation to an event.