**Close of Poll arrangements at the Count Venue**

**Aims**

* Record and action return of items from Polling Stations
* Record and action return of items from Postal Vote Opening
* Prepare Polling Station and Postal Vote returns for Ballot Box Opening and eCount
* Identify issues and record these for Supervisor/Manager then onwards to the RO/DRO/Count Centre Manager (for sharing with Registration/Verification Operators)

**Key Actions**

* Training for polling station staff on the return of ballot boxes and key documents (examples of Close of Poll at the Polling Stations for your interest on the EMB website at <https://www.emb.scot/downloads/download/161/scottish-local-government-elections-may-2022---forms>
* Preparation of documentation at close of poll for registration/verification in preparation for eCount commencing
* Receipt of ballot box and poll stationery from polling stations
* Conclude final postal vote opening session
* Align Ballot Boxes with matching Ballot Paper Trays.
* Transfer of postal vote and polling station ballot boxes and trays to eCount area
* Numeric check of ballot paper accounts
* Copy of ballot paper accounts to verification folder
* Separate out key stationery items such as marked registers for collation
* Unused ballot papers identified and set aside for verification
* Delivery of General Stationery to appropriate area.

**Considerations**

* Venue set up for e-Count, postal vote opening, verification of unused ballot papers – ensure candidates and agents can observe these processes
* Movement of ballot boxes, postal votes, unused ballot papers and other key documents around the venue
* Communication plan of recorded discrepancies/issues arising
* Areas, zones, wards split for
* Candidates, Agents, Observers can observe verification of unused ballot papers

**Documentation/Information prepared for Registration/Verification Operators Pre-Poll and eCount**

This documentation is useful for each Ward:

* Polling Scheme in full for each Ward
* List of shared polling places ie more than one Ward per Polling Place
* Order of Count ie which Ward is first, second, etc
* Notice of Election Agents (provides awareness of Candidates/Agents for each Ward)
* List of eCount Staff – highlighting Scanning Supervisors and Marshalls
* Ballot Paper Account Folder(s) for each Registration/Verification workstation (including Postal Votes) – clearly labelled folders ready for adding Ballot Paper Accounts
* Tray to contain manual entry wallet to be passed to RO once entered
* Tray to contain manual entry wallet to be entered
* Rescan labels

**Issues Arising**

It is essential to have a clear communication process in place to record and report issues arising e.g. record issues directly onto the Ballot Paper Account under a comments section or prepare a pro-forma to record issues arising against each Ballot Box Number (ie one sheet per ward) and a clear workflow of passing this information on.

* Missing Ballot Paper Account or any other documentation – advise Supervisor/Manager to retrieve from stationery team
* Recorded issues passed to Supervisor/Manager
* Supervisor/Manager to ensure recorded information is passed to the RO/DRO/CCM
* Appropriate issues to be shared with the Registration/Verification Operators.

**Suggested Role of teams** (appreciating arrangements may vary across Councils)

**Logistics Team**

* Setting up key areas of e-Count venue
* Postal Vote and Polling Station Ballot Boxes receipted at Count and put in place ready for Ballot Box Opening process
* Delivery of Unused Ballot Paper stationery to appropriate area.
* Delivery of General Stationery to appropriate area.

**Election Support**

* Check Ballot Box numbers align with the Ballot Paper Trays.
* **Pass items to the Unused Ballot Paper Team -** It may be that your Council ask Poll Staff to package key document in a particular way to allow easy movement of items at the Count venue.
  + Ballot Paper Accounts
  + Unused Ballot Papers
  + Spoilt Ballot Paper Envelope
  + Used Tendered Ballot Paper Envelope
  + Book of Forms Envelope
  + CNL Envelope – Polling Staff may be asked to record the next Ballot Paper number on the outer envelope which provides a double check against the Ballot Paper Account)
* **Marked Register Envelope** secured for all Polling Places and sorted in number order. If you have any missing registers report this to the Supervisor/Manager who will request Logistics team to check the stationery containers again.
* **General Stationery** – carry out appropriate procedures as required eg collation of same items together, items for confidential waste or storage of stationery for dealing with post eCount.

**Unused Ballot Paper Team**

It is sometimes helpful to work in pairs for this process – one person checking the Ballot Paper Accounts and the other person checking the Unused Ballot Paper envelopes/parcels.

* **Ballot Paper Accounts checks (Person 1)**
  + open envelope
  + check arithmetic on Ballot Paper Account
  + check the number of spoils/untaken ballot papers on the Ballot Paper Account
  + check the Unused Ballot Paper totals matches with the number of Unused Ballot Papers returned
  + record any issues arising and pass to Supervisor/Manager
  + Supervisor/Manager to ensure recorded information is passed to the RO/DRO/CCM for consideration by the Registration/Verification Operators the next day.
* **Unused Ballot Papers checks (Person 2)**
  + Check the Unused Ballot Paper envelope/parcel matches the Ballot Paper Account
  + Count the number of unused ballot books (ie 100 in each)
  + Count the number of remaining papers in the part used book
* **Ballot Paper Accounts after checks**
  + Put Ballot Paper Accounts in order (ie as per polling scheme for each Ward)
  + 2 copies of the Ballot Paper Accounts required
  + one copy to be placed in the Ballot Paper Accounts Registration Folder (in order of preference for opening)
  + one copy placed in the appropriate Ballot Paper Tray (ie same ballot box number).
* **Verification Spreadsheet**
  + record Unused Ballot Paper information on the verification spreadsheet for each ward.
  + Advise Supervisor/Manager when complete.
  + Supervisor/Manager to advise RO/DRO/CCM to allow further update with used ballot papers after eCount for each Ward.
  + Verification Spreadsheet to be shared with Candidates, Agents, Observers.

Electoral Management Board for Scotland

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