

List of preparations
Thursday 5 May 2022
(Shaded rows are particular to Tower Hamlets)

<p>The sending out of a Household Notification Letter (HNL) to all residential properties (140,703) on 20 January 2022 represented a “mini canvass” and was a significant exercise ensuring that the electoral register reflected those electors who should have been registered and those who were no longer entitled to be registered.</p> <p>This was also an opportunity to raise awareness of the forthcoming polls.</p>
<p>Personal visits by canvassers to specific properties was undertaken in March 2022. The software was utilised to identify all properties with 5 or more electors registered and each canvasser was allocated an area to visit and identify if the information was correct and to make any amendments if considered necessary. No anomalies were discovered during this exercise.</p>
<p>All polling cards were posted in envelopes with no external markings to denote that they are an election correspondence.</p>
<p>A letter was enclosed with the standard elector poll card. The envelope contained the polling card and a letter with a foreword from the Returning Officer and several standard FAQ’s.</p>
<p>Empty properties were sent a different polling card with information of the “Register to Vote” website. This was designed to capture those who may have believed that they were registered but are not and to give new electors the opportunity to apply to register to vote in time for polling in May.</p>
<p>Absent Voters were sent a polling card with the revised Electoral Commission poster “Your vote is yours alone” enclosed. The poster was amended by our communications team with advice from electoral services and this then agreed with the Commission.</p>
<p>Premises - 3 new polling places were booked, and personal visits undertaken to over 38 premises prior to polling by the facilities team and to a lesser extent by the electoral services team. There are 76 polling places in the Borough. Given the pandemic the changes to contacts and ensuring that premises remained suitable for polling purposes proved a considerable task often with premises not informing the team that changes had taken place and details of prior bookings not retained after people had left.</p>
<p>All staff are set up with a digital MEA (Mobile Elections Application) account within the Xpress software and Tower Hamlets are at the forefront nationally having this in place so comprehensively. Consequently, all staffing appointments are now digitised and sent via the application with each member of staff enabled to update their own personal details and receive and accept official appointments and state their availability.</p> <p>Details include the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full names Previous experience Contact details Bank Details Photographs of all staff Work Eligibility with proof to be provided Tax details
<p>Polling Clerks and Polling Station Inspectors received virtual training through a designated web portal provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA). This training was bespoke and the AEA worked very closely with the Tower Hamlets Electoral Services team to change and add content that was particular to the Borough. The training involved all staff having to progress through a series of scenarios and then answer questions and only when all questions were answered correctly was the member of staff appointed into the position. The training also had a management portal to monitor attendance and completion of the course.</p>
<p>Face to face training of Presiding Officers and Polling Station Inspectors took place at the Town Hall. There were five two-hour sessions arranged. This involved setting up a mock polling station and a carousel of questions for staff to answer. The training was also attended by Electoral Commission accredited observers who were invited.</p>

Count Supervisor training was undertaken at the later end of 2021 (Virtual) and covered all aspects of the anticipated count scenarios expected in May 2022 namely block vote counting, first past the post, doubtful ballot paper examples, a video on how to use grass skirts and how to run preferential vote counts.

Supervisors were also encouraged to pick their own teams so that they knew the staff they were working with. All supervisors were experienced having worked at previous polls in this role.

Additional posters were produced with an amendment made to the Commissions "Your vote is yours alone" to highlight the necessity for the secret vote in the polling booth.

This was agreed with the Commission and A3 desktop stands were purchased to place these posters in prominent positions on the desks when issuing ballot papers in the polling stations.

A4 posters were also supplied with 4 posters in total at every polling station provided.

Ballot Booth Privacy Banners continue to be used in Tower Hamlets at every polling station to aid with the secrecy of the ballot.

Marked exclusion zones continue to be implemented using hazard tape outside every polling place to prevent crowding at the immediate entrances to polling places. In certain polling places this method proved difficult with the tape not sticking to the ground and an alternative arrangement will need to be considered in the future.

All polling places were RAG rated across the Borough and discussed with the Police.

A police officer was stationed at every polling place from 6.30am until the close of poll with every officer having undertaken training directly from the police. Emphasis was on the legal interpretation of family voting and campaigning outside polling places, these issues raised at the briefings held with the political parties.

On polling day, a central team was set up in the Electoral Services Office with direct numbers allocated for police use only with a formal log kept of all calls received and subsequently referred to the police and the outcome of any incident reported recorded. A senior Tower Hamlets Officer was allocated to be the direct police liaison from 6am until 10.30pm.

Allegations of electoral malpractice could be reported either

- directly to the electoral services team,
- through the Tower Hamlets web portal [Report electoral fraud \(towerhamlets.gov.uk\)](https://towerhamlets.gov.uk) (TH are the only authority with an online portal in place)
- by email directly to the police SETElections@met.police.uk,
- Telephone 101 or contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Staffing of the polling stations was higher than the busier Parliamentary elections held in 2019 and the numbers recruited was above the recommended Electoral Commission ratio levels. (Electorate/Staff allocated) In addition, the number of Polling Station Inspectors was increased from 10 to 18 with visits to the polling places also undertaken by the Returning Officer Will Tuckley and Denise Radley.

All agents appointed were provided with written guidance on what the roles entailed.

Tower Hamlets had **288** polling agents formally appointed with photographs printed on all appointments sent out.

To put this into context the next highest number of polling agents appointed in any Borough in London was **40** and no other authority uses photographs as a method of identification for people entering polling stations as scrutineers.

Tower Hamlets also had **8** Election Agents and **226** candidates, so this equated to an unprecedented number (**522**) authorised to enter polling places across the Borough.

Election agents were issued with photo appointments

Counting agents were issued with colour coded photo appointments for the 3 counting stages on the Friday and then the Saturday

The continued use of the security system enabling the checking of photographs on appointments at the count venue proved successful, but this is due to be enhanced for further polls held with additional stations to assist with the checking and to cover where there is more than one entrance into the halls.