Draft Regulations laid before Parliament under section 201(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2) (read in accordance with section 27(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50)), for approval by resolution of each House of Parliament.

DRAFT STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2026 No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland Elections (Combined Polls 2027) Regulations 2026

Made - - - - ***

Coming into force

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The Secretary of State makes these Regulations in exercise of the powers conferred by section 15(5) and (5B) of the Representation of the People Act 1985(**a**) and section 201(3) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 ("1983 Act")(**b**).

In accordance with section 7(1) and (2) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000(**c**) the Secretary of State has consulted the Electoral Commission before making these Regulations.

(**a**) 1985 c. 50. The scope of the power conferred by section 15(5) was amended as a result of the insertion of subsection (3A) of that section. Subsections (3A) and (5B) were inserted by paragraph 15 of the Schedule to the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act 2011 (c. 14). That Schedule was repealed by section 1 of the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022 (c. 11) but by virtue of section 5(2) of that Act, the repeal does not affect the insertion of subsections (3A) and (5B).

(**b**) 1983 c. 2. Section 201(3) was inserted by paragraph 21 of Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 2000 (c. 2), and applies to the powers conferred by section 15 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50) by virtue of section 27(2) of that Act.

(**c**) 2000 c. 41.

In accordance with section 201(2) of the 1983 Act(**a**), a draft of this instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

PART 1

General provisions

Citation, commencement and extent

1.—(1) These Regulations may be cited as the Northern Ireland Elections (Combined Polls 2027) Regulations 2026.

(2) They come into force on the day after the day on which they are made.

(3) They extend to Northern Ireland only.

Interpretation

2. In these Regulations—

"1962 Act" means the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962(**b**);

"1983 Act" means the Representation of the People Act 1983;

"1985 Act" means the Representation of the People Act 1985;

"1985 Order" means the Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 1985(**c**);

"2001 Order" means the Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001(**d**);

"2008 Regulations" means the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008(**e**) as applied for the purposes of Assembly elections by article 3 of, and Schedule 2 to, the 2001 Order(**f**) with the modifications set out in those provisions;

"AER" (Assembly Elections Rules) means the parliamentary elections rules(**g**) as applied for the purposes of Assembly elections by article 3 of, and Schedule 1 to, the 2001 Order(**h**) with the modifications set out in those provisions;

"Assembly election" means an election of the Northern Ireland Assembly;

"Chief Electoral Officer" has the meaning given in section 130(1) of the 1962 Act;

"local election" has the meaning given in section 130(1) of the 1962 Act(**i**);

"LER" means the local elections rules in Schedule 5 to the 1962 Act(**j**);

"relevant Assembly election" and "relevant local election" have the meanings given in regulation 5 and references to "relevant election" are to be interpreted accordingly;

"relevant combined document" has the meaning given in regulation 4.

(**a**) Section 201(2) was substituted by paragraph 69 of Schedule 4 to the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c. 50). Section 201(2) applies to regulations made under section 15 of the 1985 Act by virtue of section 27(2) of that Act.
(**b**) 1962 c. 14 (N.I.).
(**c**) S.I. 1985/454.
(**d**) S.I. 2001/2599.
(**e**) S.I. 2008/1741.
(**f**) Article 3 and Schedule 2 were substituted by S.I. 2009/256.
(**g**) The parliamentary elections rules are those in Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2).
(**h**) Schedule 1 was substituted by S.I. 2009/256.
(**i**) The definition was amended by S.I. 1985/454.
(**j**) The rules in Schedule 5 were substituted by S.I. 1985/454.

Forms

3. In these Regulations, a reference to a numbered form is (unless otherwise indicated) a reference to the relevant numbered form in the Schedule.

Meaning of relevant combined document

4. In these Regulations, "relevant combined document" means—

(a) a certificate as to employment that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 14;

(b) a marked copy of the register of electors that, in accordance with regulation 16, is marked in respect of both of the relevant elections;

(c) the list of proxies that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 17;

(d) the list of votes marked by the presiding officer that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 18;

(e) a declaration made by the companion of a voter with disabilities that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 19;

(f) the list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 20;

(g) the tendered votes list that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 21;

(h) the list of persons to whom ballot papers are delivered in consequence of late alterations to the register that is in the combined form provided for by regulation 22.

PART 2

Combined polls 2027

Chapter 1

The polls

Relevant elections 2027

5. These Regulations apply if the Chief Electoral Officer gives a direction under section 15(3A) of the 1985 Act (combination of polls) that the polls at the Assembly election on 6th May 2027(**a**) ("relevant Assembly election") are to be taken together with the polls at the local elections on that date(**b**) ("relevant local election").

Timetable

6. The timetable set out in rule 1 of the AER and in rule 1(2) of the LER(**c**) is, in respect of the relevant elections, to be read as if each reference to the "16th day" was instead to the 19th day.

(**a**) The date of the polls at the next Assembly election is determined in accordance with section 31(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (c. 47).

(**b**) The date of the polls at the next local elections in Northern Ireland is determined in accordance with section 11(1) and (1A) of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (c. 14) (N.I.). Subsections (1) and (1A) were substituted by S.I. 2013/3156.

(**c**) Rule 1(2) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.

Colour of ballot papers

7. The ballot papers used for the relevant Assembly election(**a**) must be of a different colour from the ballot papers used for the relevant local election(**b**).

Postal ballot papers - declarations of identity

8.—(1) In respect of the relevant Assembly election—

(a) the reference in rule 24(1)(c) of the AER(**c**) to a declaration of identity "in the prescribed form" is instead to be read as a reference to a declaration of identity in the form set out in Form 1;

(b) regulation 71(b) of the 2008 Regulations(**d**) is to be disregarded;

(c) the reference in regulation 81A(1)(c) of the 2008 Regulations(**e**) to a declaration of identity in "the form set out in regulation 71 (form of declaration of identity)" is instead to be read as a reference to a declaration of identity in the form set out in Form 1.

(2) In respect of the relevant local election—

(a) the reference in rule 21(1) of the LER(**f**) to a declaration of identity in "the form prescribed in the Appendix" is instead to be read as a reference to a declaration of identity in the form set out in Form 2;

(b) the reference in paragraph 12A(1)(c) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**g**) to a declaration of identity in "the form set out in the Appendix to the Local Elections Rules (form 5)" is instead to be read as a reference to a declaration of identity in the form set out in Form 2.

Official poll cards

9.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may combine the official poll card for the relevant Assembly election(**h**) with the official poll card for the relevant local election(**i**).

(2) If they do so, rule 28(3) of the AER(**j**) and rule 25(3) of the LER(**k**) are, in respect of the relevant elections, to be read as permitting the Chief Electoral Officer to modify the prescribed form of the official poll card(**l**) as necessary for the purpose of enabling the combination.

(**a**) Rule 19 of the AER makes provision about ballot papers to be used at Assembly elections.
(**b**) Rule 16 of the LER makes provision about ballot papers to be used at local elections.
(**c**) Rule 24 was substituted by section 37 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**d**) Regulation 71(b) was amended by S.I. 2015/221.
(**e**) Regulation 81A was inserted by S.I. 2014/1808.
(**f**) Rule 21(1) was amended by S.I. 2014/1116.
(**g**) Paragraph 12A was inserted by S.I. 2014/1116.
(**h**) Rule 28(1) of the AER provides for an official poll card to be sent to electors and to their proxies in respect of an Assembly election. Rule 28(1) was substituted by paragraph 70 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**i**) Rule 25(1) of the LER provides for an official poll card to be sent to electors and to their proxies in respect of a local election. Rule 25(1) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977 and 2014/1116.
(**j**) Rule 28(3) was amended by paragraph 70 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**k**) Rule 25(3) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.
(**l**) Rule 28(3) of the AER and regulation 9 of S.I. 2008/1741 (that regulation was substituted by S.I. 2014/1808) prescribe that official poll cards in respect of Assembly elections are to be in the form set out in Forms A and B in Schedule 3 to those Regulations (subject to the modifications made by Schedule 2 to S.I. 2001/2599). Forms A and B were substituted by S.I. 2023/1116. Rule 25(3) of the LER prescribes that official polls cards in respect of local elections are to be in the form set out in the Appendix of Forms to those Rules. The relevant forms, Forms 6 and 7, were substituted by S.I. 2023/1083.

Ballot boxes

10.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may use the same ballot boxes for the relevant elections(**a**).

(2) If they use separate ballot boxes for each relevant election, each ballot box must be clearly marked to show—

(a) the election for which it is being used, and

(b) the colour of the ballot papers that should be placed into it.

(3) If they use separate ballot boxes for each relevant election, the placing of a ballot paper relating to one relevant election into the ballot box used for the other relevant election does not render it invalid.

(4) In this regulation, references to ballot boxes include references to postal voters' ballot boxes and postal ballot boxes(**b**).

Ballot papers displayed in polling stations

11. Each large version of the ballot paper that is provided under rule 29(3A)(a) of the AER(**c**) or rule 26(3A)(a) of the LER(**d**) (for display inside the polling station) in respect of the relevant elections must be of the same colour as the ballot paper of which it is a large version.

Guidance to be exhibited at polling stations

12.—(1) A notice in the form set out in Form 3 giving directions for the guidance of the voters in voting at each of the relevant elections—

(a) must be printed in conspicuous characters, and

(b) must be exhibited outside each polling station used for the relevant elections and in every compartment of each polling station.

(2) In respect of the relevant elections, the following provisions are to be disregarded—

(a) rule 29(4) and (5) of the AER (and the relevant form in the Appendix of Forms to the AER)(**e**);

(b) rule 26(4) of the LER (and the relevant form in the Appendix of Forms to the LER)(**f**).

Admission to polling station

13. In respect of the relevant elections, the presiding officer must exclude all persons from the polling station except the persons listed in either of the following provisions—

(a) rule 32(1) of the AER(**g**);

(b) rule 29(1) of the LER(**h**).

(**a**) Rule 29(1) of the AER requires the returning officer to provide ballot boxes for use at an Assembly election. Rule 26(1) of the LER makes equivalent provision for local elections.

(**b**) Regulation 83(1) of S.I. 2008/1741 requires that separate postal voters' ballot boxes and postal ballot boxes be provided for the receipt of postal voting documents for Assembly elections. Paragraph 14(1) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to S.I. 1985/454 makes equivalent provision for local elections.

(**c**) Rule 29(3A) of the parliamentary elections rules was inserted by section 13(2) of the Representation of the People Act 2000 (c. 2).

(**d**) Rule 26(3A) was inserted by S.I. 2001/417.

(**e**) The Appendix is modified in its application to Assembly elections by Schedule 1 to S.I. 2001/2599, and the relevant form is found in the Appendix to that Schedule. That form was substituted by S.I. 2015/222.

(**f**) The relevant form in the Appendix, Form 8, was substituted by S.I. 2015/566.

(**g**) Rule 32(1) was substituted by paragraph 84 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).

(**h**) Rule 29(1) was substituted by paragraph 57 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).

Certificates as to employment

14.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may, in respect of the relevant elections, combine in a single form the certificate as to employment required by rule 32(3) of the AER with the certificate required by rule 29(3) of the LER(**a**).

(2) If they do so—

(a) the certificate must be in the form set out in Form 4;

(b) the reference in rule 32(3) of the AER to a certificate "in the prescribed form" and the reference in rule 29(3) of the LER to a certificate "in the form in the Appendix"(**b**) are instead each to be read as a reference to a certificate in the form set out in Form 4;

(c) regulation 68(1) of the 2008 Regulations is to be disregarded(**c**).

Questions to be put to voters

15.—(1) Rule 35(1) of the AER(**d**) is to be read in respect of the relevant Assembly election as if—

(a) in the questions in entries 1, 2 and 3 of the table, each reference to "at this election" was instead a reference to "at this Assembly election";

(b) in the questions in entries 2 and 3 of the table, each reference to "in this election" was instead a reference to "in this Assembly election";

(c) in the question in paragraph (b) of entry 3 of the table, after "here or elsewhere" there was inserted "at this Assembly election".

(2) Rule 32(1) and (2)(**e**) of the LER is to be read in respect of the relevant local election as if each reference to "at this election" was instead a reference to "at this local election".

Register of electors

16.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, the same copy of the register of electors(**f**) be used for the purposes of rule 37(1) of the AER(**g**) and rule 34(1) of the LER(**h**).

(2) If they do so, the procedure required by rule 37(1)(d) of the AER or by rule 34(1)(d) of the LER is modified in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4).

(3) If the ballot papers relating to the relevant elections are delivered at the same time, a single mark must be placed in the register against the number of the elector to denote that ballot papers have been received in respect of both of the relevant elections.

(4) If the ballot papers are delivered separately or a ballot paper is delivered in respect of only one of the relevant elections, a mark must be placed in the register against the number of the

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(**a**) Rule 29(3) was amended by S.I. 1987/168.
(**b**) The relevant form in the Appendix, Form 9, was substituted by S.I. 2015/566 and amended by S.I. 2020/635.
(**c**) Regulation 68(1) prescribes the relevant form as Form F in Schedule 3 to S.I. 2008/1741 (that form is modified for its use at Assembly elections by Schedule 2 to S.I. 2001/2599). Form F was substituted by S.I. 2015/221.
(**d**) Rule 35 was substituted by paragraph 74 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**e**) Rule 32(2) was substituted by paragraph 13 of Schedule 6 to the Elections Act 2022 (c. 37).
(**f**) Section 9(1)(b) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2) (which was substituted by paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 2000 (c. 2)), when read in accordance with section 2 of, and paragraph 8 of Part 2 to Schedule 1 to, the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 (c. 3), makes provision for the registration officer (who in Northern Ireland is, by virtue of section 8 of the 1983 Act, the Chief Electoral Officer) to maintain a register of local electors. By virtue of articles 3(3)(c) and 4 of S.I. 2001/2599, the register of local electors is also used in respect of Assembly elections.
(**g**) Rule 37(1) was amended by paragraph 90 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**h**) Rule 34(1) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.

elector in respect of each ballot paper delivered, identifying the election to which the ballot paper relates.

(5) In the case of an elector who is added to the register of electors in accordance with a notice issued under section 13BA(9) of the 1983 Act (alteration of registers in Northern Ireland: pending elections)(**a**)—

(a) the reference in paragraph (1) to the "copy of the register of electors" is to be read as a reference to the copy of that notice, and

(b) references in this regulation to a mark being placed in the register are to be read as references to a mark being made on the notice.

Lists of proxies

17.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may provide each polling station with the lists of proxies relating to the relevant elections in the form of a single list.

(2) If they do so, the procedure required by rule 37(1)(e) of the AER or rule 34(1)(e) of the LER is modified in accordance with paragraphs (3) and (4).

(3) If ballot papers relating to the relevant elections are delivered at the same time, a single mark must be placed in the list against the name of the proxy to denote that ballot papers have been received in respect of both of the relevant elections.

(4) If the ballot papers are delivered separately or a ballot paper is delivered in respect of only one of the relevant elections, a mark must be placed in the list against the name of the proxy in respect of each ballot paper delivered, identifying the election to which the ballot paper relates.

(5) In this regulation, "the list of proxies" has the meaning given in—

(a) in respect of the relevant Assembly election, section 7(4)(b) of the 1985 Act (absent voting), as applied for the purposes of Assembly elections by article 3 of, and Schedule 1 to, the 2001 Order;

(b) in respect of the relevant local election, paragraph 2(4)(b) of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**b**).

Lists of votes marked by the presiding officer

18.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, the list of votes marked by the presiding officer(**c**) compiled under rule 38(2) of the AER be combined with the list compiled under rule 35(3) of the LER.

(2) If they do so, the presiding officer must indicate in the list each entry that relates to only one of the relevant elections and the election to which it relates.

(**a**) Section 13BA was inserted by section 6(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (c. 33). Paragraph 7(2) of Schedule 4 of that Act amended Schedule 1 to the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 (c. 3) to apply section 13BA to the register of local electors.

(**b**) Provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 2, including paragraph 2(4), were substituted by S.I. 1987/168.

(**c**) Rule 26 of the AER makes provision about the appointment of presiding officers in respect of Assembly elections. Rule 23 of the LER makes equivalent provision for local elections.

Declarations made by companions assisting voters with disabilities

19.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, there be a single form for the declaration made by the companion of a voter with disabilities under rule 39(2)(b) of the AER(**a**) and the declaration under rule 36(2)(b) of the LER(**b**).

(2) If they do so—

(a) the declaration must be in the form set out in Form 5;

(b) rule 39(5)(a) of the AER(**c**) and rule 36(5)(a) of the LER(**d**) are each to be read as if the reference to a declaration "in the form in the Appendix" was instead a reference to a declaration in the form set out in Form 5.

Lists of voters with disabilities assisted by companions

20.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, the list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions compiled under rule 39(4) of the AER be combined with the list compiled under rule 36(4) of the LER.

(2) If they do so, the presiding officer must indicate in the list each entry that relates to only one of the relevant elections and the election to which it relates.

Tendered votes lists

21.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, the tendered votes list compiled under rule 40(3) of the AER(**e**) be combined with the list compiled under rule 37(6) of the LER.

(2) If they do so, the presiding officer must indicate in the list each entry that relates to only one of the relevant elections and the election to which it relates.

Lists relating to correction of errors on day of poll

22.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer may direct that, in respect of the relevant elections, the list of persons to whom ballot papers are delivered in consequence of late alterations to the register required by rule 41B of the AER(**f**) be combined with the list required by rule 39A of the LER(**g**).

(2) If they do so, the presiding officer must indicate in the list each entry that relates to only one of the relevant elections and the election to which it relates.

(**a**) Rule 39 of the parliamentary elections rules was substituted by section 13 of the Representation of the People Act 2000 (c. 2). Rule 39(2)(b) was amended by section 9(3) of the Elections Act 2022 (c. 37).

(**b**) Rule 36(2)(b) was amended by paragraph 16 of Schedule 6 to the Elections Act 2022 (c. 37).

(**c**) Schedule 1 to S.I. 2001/2599 was amended by S.I. 2015/222 with the effect that, in its application to Assembly elections, the relevant form for the purposes of rule 39 is found in the Appendix to Schedule 1. That form was amended by paragraph 46 of Schedule 6 to the Elections Act 2022 (c. 37).

(**d**) Rule 36 was substituted by S.I. 2001/417. The relevant form in the Appendix, Form 10, was substituted by S.I. 2015/566 and amended by S.I. 2020/635 and by paragraph 22 of Schedule 6 to the Elections Act 2022 (c. 37).

(**e**) Rule 40(3) was amended by paragraph 81 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).

(**f**) Rule 41B was inserted into the parliamentary elections rules by paragraph 6(8) of Schedule 4 to the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (c. 33). It has applied in respect of Assembly elections since Schedule 1 to S.I. 2001/2566 was substituted by S.I. 2009/256.

(**g**) Rule 39A was inserted by paragraph 1(7) of Schedule 4 to the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (c. 33).

Procedure on close of polls

23.—(1) In respect of the relevant elections, rule 43(1) of the AER and rule 41(1) of the LER are to be read as if references in each provision to "polling agents" included the polling agents appointed for the purposes of the poll at the other relevant election(**a**).

(2) Where rule 43 of the AER or rule 41 of the LER requires the presiding officer to make up a packet of a document that is in the form of a relevant combined document, the presiding officer must satisfy the requirement under each rule by making up a single packet of the relevant combined document.

(3) In carrying out the procedures required by rule 43 of the AER or rule 41 of the LER, the presiding officer must ensure that documents relating only to one of the relevant elections are not included in a packet with documents relating to the other relevant election.

(4) The presiding officer must not combine the statement prepared under rule 43(3) of the AER (the ballot paper account) in respect of the relevant Assembly election with the statement prepared under rule 41(3) of the LER in respect of the relevant local election (whether or not the same ballot boxes have been used for the relevant elections).

Chapter 2

The counts

Separation of ballot papers and preliminary proceedings

24.—(1) The Chief Electoral Officer must—

(a) make arrangements for the proceedings required by this regulation, and

(b) give to the counting agents(**b**) appointed for the poll at each relevant election notice in writing of the place and time at which the proceedings will be carried out.

(2) At 8 a.m. on the day after the day of the polls at the relevant elections or as soon as practicable after that, the returning officer(**c**) must—

(a) in the presence of the counting agents, open each ballot box used for the elections (whether the same or separate ballot boxes are used) and then—

(i) separate the ballot papers relating to the relevant Assembly election from the ballot papers relating to the relevant local election,

(ii) count and record the number of ballot papers (if any) relating to each relevant election in each ballot box,

(b) in the presence of the election agents appointed for the relevant elections(**d**), verify each ballot paper account relating to the relevant Assembly election in accordance with the requirements of rule 44B(7) of the AER(**e**) and each ballot paper account relating to the relevant local election in accordance with the requirements of rule 45(5) of the LER(**f**), and

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(**a**) Rule 30 of the AER makes provision about the appointment of polling agents in respect of Assembly elections. Rule 27 of the LER makes equivalent provision in respect of local elections.

(**b**) Rule 30 of the AER makes provision about the appointment of counting agents in respect of the polls at Assembly elections. Rule 27 of the LER makes equivalent provision for local elections. Rule 27 was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.

(**c**) Article 5(1) of S.I. 2001/2599 provides that the Chief Electoral Officer is the returning officer for Assembly elections. Rule 3 of the LER provides that the Chief Electoral Officer is the returning officer in respect of local elections.

(**d**) Section 67 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2) (as applied by S.I. 2001/2599) makes provision about the appointment of election agents at Assembly elections. Section 34 of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (c. 14) (N.I.) makes equivalent provision for local elections.

(**e**) Rule 44B(7) was amended by S.I. 2014/1804.

(**f**) Rule 45(5) was amended by S.I. 2014/1116.

(c) count such of the postal ballot papers as have been duly returned (in accordance with the requirements of rule 44B(3) of the AER(**a**)) in respect of the relevant Assembly election and duly returned (in accordance with the requirements of rule 45(2) of the LER(**b**)) in respect of the relevant local election and record the number counted for each.

(3) The returning officer must draw up a statement as to the result of the verification for the relevant Assembly election in accordance with the requirements of rule 44B(7) of the AER and for the relevant local election in accordance with the requirements of rule 45(5) of the LER, and must allow any election agent appointed for a relevant election to copy either statement.

(4) As soon as practicable after the completion of the proceedings set out in paragraphs (2) and (3) the returning officer must—

(a) in the presence of the counting agents appointed for the relevant local election poll, return the ballot papers relating to the relevant local election to the ballot boxes used for that election, seal the boxes and allow the counting agents to affix their seals to the boxes, and

(b) proceed with counting the votes relating to the relevant Assembly election (in accordance with rule 44A to 44M of the AER as modified by regulation 25 of these Regulations).

(5) In carrying out the proceedings under this regulation, the returning officer must keep the ballot papers with their faces upwards and take all proper precautions for preventing any person from seeing the numbers and other unique identifying marks printed on the back of the papers.

(6) No person, other than a person specified in rule 44(2) of the AER(**c**) or rule 44(1) of the LER(**d**), may be present at the proceedings under this regulation unless permitted by the returning officer to be present.

(7) The returning officer may give such permission only if—

(a) they are satisfied that the proceedings will not be impeded, and

(b) they have either consulted the election agents for the relevant elections or consider that it is impracticable to do so.

(8) The returning officer must make arrangements for the security of the ballot papers and documents relating to the relevant local election during the period between the conclusion of the proceedings under this regulation and the commencement of the counting of the votes for the relevant local election.

Counting of votes

25.—(1) In respect of the relevant Assembly election—

(a) rule 44(1) of the AER is to be read as if the reference to "after the close of the poll" was instead a reference to after the conclusion of the proceedings under regulation 24 of these Regulations;

(b) rule 44(2) of the AER is to be read as if it included a reference to the persons specified in rule 44(1) of the LER;

(c) rule 44B(1) of the AER is to be disregarded.

(2) In respect of the relevant local election—

(**a**) Rule 44B(3) was amended by S.I. 2015/222 and 2024/319.
(**b**) Rule 45(2) was amended by S.I. 2002/2835 and 2024/382.
(**c**) Rule 44(2) was amended by paragraph 85 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22).
(**d**) Rule 44(1) was amended by paragraph 58 of Schedule 1 to the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22) and by S.I. 2010/2977.

(a) rule 43(1) of the LER is to be read as if the reference to "9 in the morning on the day after the day of the poll" was instead a reference to 9 in the morning on the fourth day after the day of the polls at the relevant elections or at such later time and date as the returning officer may direct;

(b) rule 44(1) of the LER is to be read as if it included a reference to the persons specified in rule 44(2) of the AER;

(c) rule 45(1) of the LER is to be disregarded and the procedure in paragraph (3) of this regulation is to be followed instead.

(3) Before counting the votes relating to the relevant local election in accordance with rule 45 of the LER, the returning officer must, in the presence of the counting agents appointed for that poll—

(a) open each ballot box and take out the ballot papers, and

(b) mix together the whole of the ballot papers (including those postal ballot papers that have been duly returned in accordance with the requirements of rule 45(2) of the LER).

Chapter 3

Death of candidate

Countermand or abandonment of poll

26.—(1) This regulation applies if, in accordance with rule 60(4) or 63(2) of the AER(**a**) or rule 61(4) or 63(2) of the LER(**b**), the notice of the poll at a relevant election is countermanded or the poll is directed to be abandoned.

(2) The countermand or direction does not affect the poll at the other relevant election.

(3) In respect of the relevant elections, rule 65(2) of the AER and rule 64(2) of the LER are to be read as if the requirements imposed on the presiding officer did not arise until the close of the poll at the relevant election that has not been abandoned.

(4) The procedures required by rule 65(3) to (6) of the AER or rule 64(3) to (6) of the LER are, in respect of the relevant elections, to be applied after the conclusion of the proceedings under regulation 24 of these Regulations.

Chapter 4

Members of district councils retiring and coming into office

Date on which members of district councils retire and come into office

27. In respect of the relevant local election, section 11(2) of the 1962 Act(**c**) is to be read as if each reference to the "fourth day after the election day" instead was to the seventh day after the election day.

(**a**) Rules 60 to 65 were substituted by section 24 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (c. 22). Rule 60(4) was amended in its application to Assembly elections by an amendment of Schedule 1 to S.I. 2001/2599 made by S.I. 2010/2892.
(**b**) Rules 61 to 64 were substituted by S.I. 2010/2977.
(**c**) Section 11(2) was amended by S.I. 1992/810 (N.I. 6).

Chapter 5

Postal ballot proceedings

Attendance at proceedings on the issue or receipt of postal ballot papers

28. No person other than the persons listed in either of the following provisions may be present at the proceedings on the issue or receipt of postal ballot papers in respect of relevant elections—

(a) regulation 72(1) of the 2008 Regulations(**a**);

(b) paragraph 3(1) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**b**).

Opening of the last postal voters' ballot box and the last postal ballot box

29. In respect of the relevant elections, the following provisions are instead each to be read as if they provided for the last postal voters' ballot box and the last postal ballot box to be opened at the proceedings under regulation 24 of these Regulations—

(a) regulation 85(3) of the 2008 Regulations;

(b) paragraph 16(3) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**c**).

Postal voting documents returned in ballot paper envelopes relating to the other relevant election

30.—(1) If the returning officer has reasonable cause to suspect that a ballot paper envelope relating to a relevant election contains a postal voting document relating to the other relevant election, they may open the envelope.

(2) If the returning officer opens a ballot paper envelope under paragraph (1) or under regulation 88(1) of the 2008 Regulations or paragraph 17B(1) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**d**) and finds a postal voting document relating to the other relevant election, they must deal with the document in accordance with the relevant provision in paragraph (3).

(3) The relevant provision is—

(a) if the postal voting document relates to the relevant Assembly election, regulation 87(8) of the 2008 Regulations;

(b) if the postal voting document relates to the relevant local election, paragraph 17A(8) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**e**).

(4) In this regulation, "postal voting document" and "ballot paper envelope" have the meanings given in—

(a) in respect of the relevant Assembly election, regulation 70(1) of the 2008 Regulations(**f**);

(b) in respect of the relevant local election, paragraph 1(1) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order(**g**).

(**a**) Regulation 72(1) was amended by S.I. 2010/278.
(**b**) Paragraph 3(1) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.
(**c**) Paragraph 16 was substituted by S.I. 2002/2835 and sub-paragraph (3) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.
(**d**) Paragraph 17B was inserted (by way of substitution) by S.I. 2002/2835.
(**e**) Paragraph 17A was inserted (by way of substitution) by S.I. 2002/2835.
(**f**) Regulation 70(1) was renumbered and amended by S.I. 2024/319.
(**g**) Paragraph 1(1) was renumbered and amended by S.I. 2024/382.

PART 3

Retention and disposal of documents

Retention of documents by the returning officer

31.—(1) The returning officer must ensure that a packet containing a relevant combined document is endorsed with the date of the relevant elections, the name of the constituency for which the relevant Assembly election(**a**) was held and the name of the district electoral area for which the relevant local election was held(**b**).

(2) Part 6 of the LER is, in respect of the relevant local election, to be read as if—

(a) rule 58(3) instead required that any document or packet of documents referred to in rule 58(1)(b) to (e)(**c**) be retained by the returning officer;

(b) in so far as rule 59 applies in relation to the completed corresponding number lists or certificates as to employment on duty on the day of the poll, references in that rule to the proper officer of the council were instead to the returning officer;

(c) rule 60(1)(**d**) also applied to the returning officer in respect of the documents retained by them in accordance with the modifications made by these Regulations.

(3) In respect of the relevant local election, paragraph 19(1) to (2A)(**e**) of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the 1985 Order is to be read as if any requirement imposed on the returning officer to forward a document or a packet of documents to the proper officer of the relevant council was instead a requirement to retain the document or packet (and paragraph 19(3) and (4)(**f**) is to be read accordingly).

Access to marked registers and other documents

32. In respect of the relevant local election, Schedule 3 to the Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 2010(**g**) is to be read as if—

(a) in the definition of "the marked register or lists" in paragraph 1(1), the reference to documents retained by the proper officer under certain provisions was instead to those documents retained by the returning officer in accordance with the modifications made by these Regulations;

(b) references to the "proper officer" were, in their application to documents retained by the returning officer in accordance with these Regulations, to the returning officer;

(c) paragraphs 2(4) and 3(3) were omitted;

(d) paragraph 2(5)(b) required the fee to be paid to the returning officer.

(**a**) Section 33 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (c. 47) requires that 5 members of the Assembly be returned for each of the parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland.
(**b**) Article 5 of S.I. 1985/454 requires a separate election for each district electoral area. S.I. 2014/270 makes provision about district electoral areas.
(**c**) Rule 58(1)(e) was amended by paragraph 1 of Schedule 4 to the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (c. 33).
(**d**) Rule 60(1) was amended by S.I. 2010/2977.
(**e**) Paragraph 19(2A) was inserted by S.I. 2024/382.
(**f**) Paragraph 19(4) was inserted by S.I. 2024/382.
(**g**) S.I. 2010/2977.

Name
Minister
DATE Northern Ireland Office

SCHEDULE

Regulation 3

Forms

PART 1

Form 1 — Declaration of identity for relevant Assembly election

«ELECTOR_FORENAME» «ELECTOR_SURNAME»
«Address1»
«Address2»
«Address3»
«Address4»
«Address5»
«Postcode»

EONI Logo

2D BarCode

Ballot Paper Number:
«MAIN_BALLOT_PAPER_NUMBER»

- **Important – you must fill in and return this Declaration of Identity with your completed ballot paper for your vote to be counted.**
- Check that the number on the back of your ballot paper is the same as the Ballot Paper Number above. If they do not match, call us immediately on «Add telephone»
- After receiving a postal vote, you cannot vote in person at a polling station in this election.

Declaration of Identity

Northern Ireland Assembly Election: «AREA_NAME»
Date of Election: «ELECTION-DATE»
Name: «ELECTOR_FORENAME» «ELECTOR_SURNAME»
Ballot paper number: «MAIN_AREA_CODE»«MAIN_BALLOT_PAPER_NUMBER»

I am the person the ballot paper numbered above was sent to.

My Date of Birth is: | | | | | | | | |
Day Month Year

My Signature is:

We will check this information. It is an offence to vote using a ballot paper that was not sent for your use or interfere with another voter's ballot paper. It is an offence to vote more than once at the same election (unless you are appointed as proxy).

The voter has signed this declaration in my presence.

Witness signature: _____

The witness must be aged 18 or over & satisfied to the best of their knowledge and belief as to the identity of the voter.

Please turn over

Instructions for voting by post

- **For your vote to be counted, you must fill in the Declaration of Identity (overleaf) in the presence of a witness and return it by post with your completed ballot paper to the Electoral Office.**

- Make sure you have filled in all the information on the Declaration of Identity **and** your witness has signed it.
- On the ballot paper, number the candidates in order of preference, putting '1' against your first choice, '2' against your second and so on.
- You must **not** put the same number against more than one candidate.
- You may number as many or as few candidates as you wish.

Getting help

- If you need help to vote, you can ask someone you know, however the person helping you must not tell anyone how you voted.
- Please call us on «Add telephone» if you need information in another format.
- If you make a mistake, you can get a replacement if you return all your postal vote documents. Call us on «Add telephone» as we can only issue a replacement before «Add date time».

Electoral fraud is a crime
Issued by the Chief Electoral Officer

1st Class Bar here

Name of Constituency to be inserted here

Colour bar

Freepost Bar code to be inserted here
<Insert licence number>
Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
BELFAST
«Add licence code postcode»

Electoral Office address with Barcode and Constituency Name and colour bar must be visible through the windows of Envelope B

PART 2

Form 2 — Declaration of identity for relevant local election

«ELECTOR_FORENAME» «ELECTOR_SURNAME» EONI Logo
«Address1»
«Address2»
«Address3»
«Address4»
«Address5»
«Postcode»

2D BarCode

Ballot Paper Number:
«MAIN_BALLOT_PAPER_NUMBER»

- **Important – you must fill in and return this Declaration of Identity with your completed ballot paper for your vote to be counted.**
- Check that the number on the back of your ballot paper is the same as the Ballot Paper Number above. If they do not match, call us immediately on «Add telephone»
- After receiving a postal vote, you cannot vote in person at a polling station in this election.

Declaration of Identity

Local Council Election: «AREA_NAME»
Date of Election: «ELECTION-DATE»
Name: «ELECTOR_FORENAME» «ELECTOR_SURNAME»
Ballot paper number: «MAIN_AREA_CODE»«MAIN_BALLOT_PAPER_NUMBER»

I am the person the ballot paper numbered above was sent to.

My Date of Birth is: | | | Day | | | Month | | | | Year |

My Signature is:

We will check this information. It is an offence to vote using a ballot paper that was not sent for your use or interfere with another voter's ballot paper. It is an offence to vote more than once at the same election (unless you are appointed as proxy).

The voter has signed this declaration in my presence.

Witness signature: _____

The witness must be aged 18 or over & satisfied to the best of their knowledge and belief as to the identity of the voter.

Please turn over

Instructions for voting by post

- **For your vote to be counted, you must fill in the Declaration of Identity (overleaf) in the presence of a witness and return it by post with your completed ballot paper to the Electoral Office.**

- Make sure you have filled in all the information on the Declaration of Identity **and** your witness has signed it.
- On the ballot paper, number the candidates in order of preference, putting '1' against your first choice, '2' against your second and so on.
- You must **not** put the same number against more than one candidate.
- You may number as many or as few candidates as you wish.

Getting help

- If you need help to vote, you can ask someone you know, however the person helping you must not tell anyone how you voted.
- Please call us on «Add telephone» if you need information in another format.
- If you make a mistake, you can get a replacement if you return all your postal vote documents. Call us on «Add telephone» as we can only issue a replacement before «Add date time».

Electoral fraud is a crime
Issued by the Chief Electoral Officer

1st Class Bar here

Name of District Electoral Area to be inserted here

Colour bar

Freepost Bar code to be inserted here
<Insert licence number>
Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
BELFAST
«Add licence code postcode»

Electoral Office address with Barcode and District Electoral Area and colour bar must be visible through the windows of Envelope B

PART 3

Form 3 — Guidance to be exhibited at polling stations

How to vote at these elections

1 Go to the desk and tell staff your name and address.
Show staff your accepted form of Photo ID.



You will be given two ballot papers:
[Insert colour of ballot paper] - Northern Ireland Assembly
2 [insert colour of ballot paper] - Local Council elections



Take both ballot papers to a voting booth.

---

3 **MARK EACH BALLOT SEPARATELY 1, 2, 3 AND SO ON**

On the [insert colour] Assembly ballot paper, mark a '1' against your first preferred candidate, a '2' against your second preferred candidate and so on, for as many candidates as you wish.



On the [insert colour] Council ballot paper, mark a '1' against your first preferred candidate, a '2' against your second preferred candidate and so on, for as many candidates as you wish.



Complete each ballot paper separately

---

4 Fold each ballot paper separately and place both ballot papers into the relevant ballot box



Voting is secret. Do not let anyone see how you voted.
If you need help, just ask the staff.

PART 4

Form 4 — Combined certificate as to employment

Certificate of Employment

Local Council Election
[insert name of District Council] District Council
[insert name of District Electoral Area] District Electoral Area
Northern Ireland Assembly Election*
[insert name of constituency] Constituency
Date of election [day] [date] [month] [year]
Ballot box number:

The person named below is entitled to vote at any polling station in the above district electoral area on production and surrender of this certificate to the Presiding Officer*
The person named below is entitled to vote at any polling station in the above constituency on production and surrender of this certificate to the Presiding Officer*
I certify that _____ (name of elector) who is numbered _____ in the register of electors for the district electoral area/constituency named above cannot reasonably be expected to go in person to the polling station allotted to them at these elections by reason of his/her employment on the above date for a purpose connected with these elections: - as a constable* - by me (Only applies to Returning Officer's staff)* Signature _____Returning Officer/Police Officer *(Inspector or above)** Date _____ * Person completing the form to delete whichever does not apply.

PART 5

Form 5 — Combined declaration by the companion of a voter with disabilities

Form of declaration to be made by the companion of a voter with disabilities

Declaration for the companion of a voter with disabilities

Northern Ireland Assembly Election*   ***[insert name of constituency]* constituency**
Local Council Election*   **[*insert name of District Council*] District Council**   **[*insert name of District Electoral Area*] District Electoral Area**
Date of elections [day] [date] [month] [year]
Ballot box number:
A voter with disabilities is a voter who has made a declaration that he/she is unable to vote without assistance.

Voter name	
Number on register of elector	
Where a person is voting as a proxy, the number on register must be that of the person for whom they are voting.	

Part 1 To be completed by the voter's companion			
Companion name			
Companion address			
I have been requested to assist the elector named above to record their vote at the above named election(s). I declare that: • I am aged 18 or over **And** • I have not previously assisted more than one voter with disabilities at the above named election(s). If I have assisted one other voter their name and address is:			
[Complete if appropriate] Name and address of other person assisted			
NOTE – It is a criminal offence to communicate at any time to any person except the elector to whom assistance is being provided any information as to the way in which the voter intends to vote or has voted.			
Companion signature		Date	

Part 2 To be completed by the Presiding Officer			
I, the undersigned, being the Presiding Officer for:			
Polling station			
Certify that the above declaration was signed in my presence		Presiding Officer signature	
Date		Time (exact)	

* Person completing the form to delete whichever does not apply.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Regulations)

These Regulations modify the application of the legislation governing elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections in Northern Ireland in order to enable polls at those elections to be taken together on 6th May 2027, if the Chief Electoral Officer directs that the polls are to be taken together.

The Regulations make provision about various matters, including the timetable for the elections, the use of ballot papers of different colours, official poll cards, ballot boxes, notices and guidance to be displayed at polling stations and admission to polling stations. The Regulations also permit certain election documents and records to be combined for the purposes of the elections, including registers, lists and declarations, and make provision about the retention of election documents.

The Regulations provide for the verification of ballot papers and ballot paper accounts for both elections before the count of votes at the Assembly election commences. They also modify the timing of the count of votes at the local elections and in consequence the date on which members of district councils retire and take office.

The Regulations also make provision about the treatment of postal ballot papers and other documents relating to postal voting in one election that are returned in an envelope relating to the other election.

A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private, voluntary or public sectors is foreseen.

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Printed and published in the UK by The Stationery Office Limited under the authority and superintendence of Saul Nassé, Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office and King's Printer of Acts of Parliament.

ISBN 978-0-34-828817-9

£8.90

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/ukdsi/2026/9780348288179

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