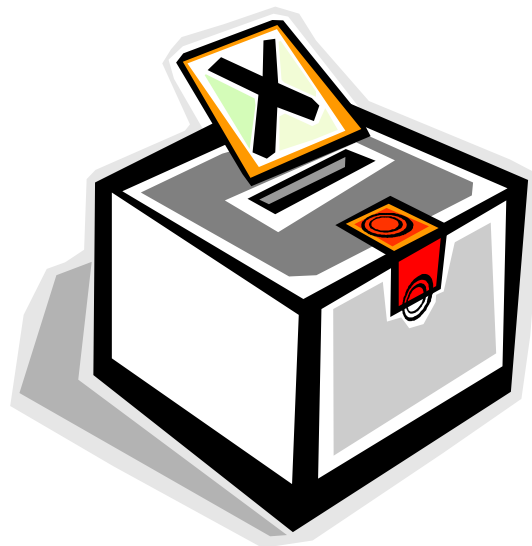




Guidance for District Council Candidates

May 2024



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Introduction

On 2 May 2024, there will be elections to Hart District Council. Elections will be held in the following wards:

District Ward	No. of Councillors to be elected
Blackwater and Hawley	1
Crookham East	1
Crookham West and Ewshot	1
Fleet Central	1
Fleet East	1
Fleet West	1
Hartley Wintney	1
Hook	1
Odiham	1
Yateley East	1
Yateley West	1

If contested, there will also be elections to Crondall, Crookham Village Parish Council, Dogmersfield and Ewshot and Police and Crime Commissioner elections on 2 May 2024.

This guidance sets out information for prospective Hart District Council candidates. It supplements guidance published by the Electoral Commission which can be found at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-and-agents-local-government-elections-england

The purpose of this guidance is to assist candidates with the completion of nomination papers to stand for election. The guidance also provides additional information to candidates about the electoral process, including the election timetable, arrangements for issuing postal votes and the count.

Additional information can be obtained from Vicci Pepper, Electoral Services Manager, on 01252 774144 (direct line) or email vicci.pepper@hart.gov.uk.

The Returning Officer

The Returning Officer (RO) is a Crown official who is legally responsible for running this election. The Returning Officer has authority to run the election in compliance with electoral law.

The Returning Officer for all district council elections in the Hart District is Daryl Phillips, Chief Executive at Hart District Council. The Returning Officer's team is led by the Electoral Services Manager and Deputy Returning Officer, Vicci Pepper, and the team can be contacted on:

Telephone: 01252 774077

Website: www.hart.gov.uk/voting-and-elections

E-mail: elections@hart.gov.uk

The elections office is situated at Hart District Council:

Civic Offices
Harlington Way
Fleet
Hampshire
GU51 4AE

Please note: The Electoral Services team will always try and help with any queries candidates may have. However, the team cannot provide legal advice.

Candidates are advised to seek their own legal advice if further guidance, particularly relating to a candidate's qualification to stand, is required.

Election Timetable

Event	Date (deadline if not midnight)
Publication of Notice of Election	Thursday, 21 March 2024
Deadline for delivery of nomination papers	4pm, Friday, 5 April 2024
Deadline for withdrawals of nomination	4pm, Friday, 5 April 2024
Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated	4pm, Monday, 8 April 2024
Deadline for receiving applications for registration	Midnight, Tuesday, 16 April 2024
Deadline for receiving new postal vote and postal proxy applications, and for changes to existing postal or proxy votes	5pm, Wednesday, 17 April 2024
Deadline for receiving applications for new proxy votes.	5pm, Wednesday, 24 April 2024
Deadline for receiving applications for Voter Authority Certificates.	5pm, Wednesday, 24 April 2024
Publication of Notice of Poll and Situation of Polling Stations	Wednesday, 24 April 2024
Deadline for Notification of Appointment of Poll and Count Agents	5pm, Thursday, 25 April 2024
First date to issue replacement lost postal ballot papers	Friday, 26 April 2024
Day of Poll	7am to 10pm, Thursday 2 May 2024
Last time to replace lost or spoilt postal votes	5pm, Thursday 2 May 2024
Deadline for receiving applications for emergency proxy votes	5pm, Thursday 2 May 2024
Last time to alter the register due to clerical error or court appeal	9pm, Thursday 2 May 2024
Delivery Election Expenses Return – ALL CANDIDATES	6 June 2024

Delivery of Nomination Papers

The Notice of Election will be published by Thursday, 21 March 2024.

Completed nominations (nomination paper, consent to nomination and home address form) must be submitted to the Returning Officer or his Deputy at the Elections Office, Civic Offices, Harlington Way, Fleet, Hampshire GU51 4AE.

Nomination papers may be submitted after the publication of the Notice of Election, and up to the close of nominations at **4pm, Friday, 5 April 2024**.

*****Please note that there is no discretion to extend this, or any other, deadline**.***

Completed nominations must be submitted by hand to the Returning Officer or his Deputy at the Elections Office, Civic Offices, Harlington Way, Fleet, Hampshire GU51 4AE. Nominations must not be submitted by email. Delivery by Royal Mail is also not permissible.

Candidates are advised to submit their nomination paper well in advance of the deadline, so that any errors/omissions can be amended.

Nomination papers are legal documents subject to inspection and challenge by other candidates and any elector. Candidates are advised to read the guidance notes carefully prior to the completion of the nomination papers, and to use blue or black ink.

Informal Checks

The Returning Officer can, on request, check through the nomination papers, before they are formally submitted. The purpose of the informal check is to ensure that candidates have completed the paperwork fully with no omissions. It checks those sections of the paper that can be amended prior to formal submission.

All candidates are advised to have an informal check before the nomination deadline. Once a nomination paper has been formally submitted, it cannot be returned for amendment if the Returning Officer determines that the nomination is not valid.

The informal check will be carried out by the Returning Officer or one of his Deputies. Candidates or agents wishing to attend the Civic Offices for the check to be carried out in person, must contact Electoral Services to book an appointment. **This service will not be available on demand.**

Alternatively, scanned copies can be emailed to **nominations@hart.gov.uk** for an informal check. The nomination papers will be checked and the candidate or agent will be advised of the outcome by return of email. **Please note that nominations should not be emailed for checking after 5pm on the day before the close of nominations (i.e. not after 5pm, Thursday, 4 April 2024).**

At the completion of the informal check, if there are omissions or errors in the areas checked, candidates will be advised of the areas for correction or completion. Where the original hard copies have been provided for checking, if there are no errors or omissions, the paper will be processed formally. If scanned copies have been emailed for checking, the candidate will be advised to deliver the hard copy by the submission deadline.

Candidates must note that the informal check is just that; it is informal and the details are not recorded. It is not a guarantee that papers will be accepted when submitted formally.

Informal Check – Areas Considered

The nomination form will be checked to ensure that:

- the electoral area, the Council name and the date of the election have been completed and are correct;
- the candidate's surname and other names have been entered, that the description, if used, matches those permitted;
- you may state your commonly used name or names on your nomination form in addition to your full names that you have provided, any commonly used name would then appear on the statement of persons nominated, notice of poll and ballot papers;
- there are two subscribers' signatures and printed names on the paper;
- the Polling District letters are correct for the electoral area; and
- there is a number in each of the electoral number boxes.

The consent to nomination will be checked to ensure that:

- the electoral area, the Council name and the date of the election are completed and are correct;
- the name matches the name given on the other two papers (nomination paper and home address form);
- there is at least one qualification that remains undeleted (and matches those provided on the home address form);
- there is a date of birth recorded;
- the form is signed;
- the form is dated;
- the form includes a witness signature;
- the form includes a witness name;
- the witness details are the same as those on the home address form; and
- the disqualification and offence clauses are attached.

The home address form will be checked to ensure that:

- the electoral area and the date of election are completed and are correct;
- the name matches the name given on the other two papers (nomination paper and home address form);
- a home address has been given;
- a qualifying address has been given and the qualification reason a), b), c), or d) is stated and matches that given on the consent to nomination;
- the name and address of the witness on the candidate's consent to nominations is present; and
- where part 2 has been completed and the home address is not to be made public, that the relevant electoral area, the candidate's signature, and the date signed is present.

Informal Check – Areas Not Considered:

The informal check will not:

- validate that any addresses given are correct postal addresses;
- correct any spelling mistakes;
- give an assurance that the subscribers are valid beyond a basic assurance that the paper has two subscribers and that the Polling District letters are valid for that electoral contest;
- validate grounds for qualification; or
- validate dates of birth.

Formal Determination of a Nomination

Candidates or agents, wishing to attend the Civic Offices, are advised to make an appointment when bringing in a completed nomination form.

The formal determination involves a review of all the items from the informal check and additionally a check that the signature of each subscriber and their electoral number given on the paper corresponds to the name and the electoral number on the Electoral Register in force for nominations.

A check will also be undertaken to ensure that the subscribers have not subscribed to more candidates' nominations than there are vacancies.

A notice of the decision on the validity of the nomination will be sent to each candidate once the formal determination has been made.

Invalid Nominations

The Returning Officer can only determine that the papers are invalid on two grounds:

1. that the particulars of the candidate or the persons subscribing the papers are not as required by law; or
2. that the paper is not subscribed as required.

If the nomination is determined to be invalid, the papers will be retained and candidates will need to submit a new nomination paper with a new set of subscribers. Candidates cannot provide additional, "top up" or "stand by" subscribers to be added to the paper in the event of one of the subscribers being invalid.

The decision of the Returning Officer on the validity of the nomination paper is final and cannot be challenged other than by High Court ruling following the election.

Withdrawal of Nominations

The deadline for withdrawal of nominations for the elections is 4pm, Friday, 5 April 2024 (the same as the close of nominations).

Inspection of Nomination Papers

Nomination papers are available for public inspection during office hours on any working day following the close of nominations, up to and including the day before polling day during normal working hours. **Candidates wishing to inspect the nomination papers should make an appointment** to attend the Civic Offices.

Inspection of the Home Address Forms is limited to validly nominated candidates in the same electoral area, their agent, or their proposer or seconder.

There is no right of objection to a local government election nomination.

Postal Votes

Postal votes will be despatched around 16 April 2024 to existing postal voters. New postal voters between 27 March 2024 and 11 April 2024 will be sent their postal vote around 17 April 2024, postal vote applications made from 12 April 2024 will be posted after 19 April 2024.

Opening sessions will be held at the Civic Offices every working day until polling day from Monday, 22 April (except Tuesday, 30 April 2024). Sessions will start at 10.00am and will finish around 3.00pm. On Thursday, 2 May the opening session will instead start at 3.30pm at Hart Leisure Centre and then an additional opening session will be held from 9pm.

Please note that the opening sessions may finish sooner if all postal votes received have been opened. Opening sessions may also be cancelled if there are insufficient postal votes to open. Agents will be advised if any amendments to this schedule are made.

Candidates, their agents and one other person are permitted to attend the opening of the postal voters' ballot boxes. Please forward the details of who wish to attend to Vicci Pepper as soon as possible. Persons attending the postal vote proceedings must have in their possession a written notice of the relevant secrecy provisions relating to the opening of postal votes.

It is advised that anyone wishing to attend the opening of postal votes arrives at the start of the session in case the session finishes early.

Polling Stations

The following polling stations will be used on 2 May:

Blackwater and Hawley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Blackwater Centre Hall, Blackwater Centre, 12 - 14 London Road, GU17 9AA • Darby Green & Frogmore Social Hall, Frogmore Road, Blackwater, GU17 0NP • Hawley Memorial Hall, Fernhill Road, Hawley Green, GU17 9BW • Meade Hall - The Crown & Cushion Pub, Minley Road, Blackwater, GU17 9UA
Crookham East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy Trinity Church Hall, Bowenhurst Road, Off Aldershot Road, GU52 8JU • Church Crookham Baptist Church, 64 Basingbourne Road, Fleet, GU52 6TH
Crookham West and Ewshot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willis Hall, Sandy Lane, GU52 8LD • Crookham Village Womens Institute Hall, The Street, Crookham Village, GU51 5SJ • Church Crookham Community Centre, Boyce Road, GU52 8AQ • Zebon Copse Centre, Danvers Drive, Church Crookham, GU52 0ZE • Ewshot Village Hall, Tadpole Lane, Ewshot, GU10 5BX
Fleet Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Harlington - Polling Station, Fleet Road, GU51 4BY
Fleet East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancells Farm Community Centre, 1 Falkners Close, Ancells Farm, GU51 2XF • St Philip & St James Church Hall, Kings Road, Fleet, GU51 3AR
Fleet West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Key Centre, The Key, Elvetham Heath, GU51 1HA • Fleet Parish Community Centre, Church Road, GU51 4NB • Hart Leisure Centre, Emerald Avenue, Off Hitches Lane, GU51 5EE
Hartley Wintney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eversley Village Hall, Reading Road, Eversley, RG27 0LX • Heckfield Memorial Hall, Church Lane, Heckfield, RG27 0LG • Victoria & Jubilee Hall Complex, West Green Road, Hartley Wintney, RG27 8RQ • Mattingley Church Hall, Mattingley Green, Mattingley, RG27 8LA • Winchfield Village Hall, Station Road, Winchfield, RG27 8BX
Hook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Elizabeth Hall, Raven Road, RG27 9HH • Rotherwick Village Hall, The Street, Rotherwick, RG27 9BD • Hook Community Centre – Sheldon Hall, Ravenscroft, RG27 9BD
Odiham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crondall Village Hall, Croft Lane, Crondall, GU10 5QG • Crookham Village Womens Institute Hall, The Street, Crookham Village, GU51 5SJ • Greywell Village Hall, The Street, Greywell, RG29 1BZ • Long Sutton Village Hall, The Street, Long Sutton, RG29 1ST • The Cross Barn, Palace Gate Farm, Odiham, RG29 1JX • North Warnborough Village Hall, Priors Corner, Dunleys Hill, RG29 1EA • The Welfare & Community Centre, RAF Odiham, Kersley Crescent, RG29 1QT • Ridley Hall - South Warnborough, Lees Hill, South Warnborough, RG29 1RW
Yateley East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Darby Green Centre, The Darby Green Road, Darby Green, GU17 0DT

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yateley Industries, Mill Lane, Yateley, GU46 7TF • Yateley & Yateley Green Womens Institute Hall, Reading Road, Yateley, GU46 7UH
Yateley West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monteagle Community Hall, Tresham Crescent, GU46 6FR • Scout Lodge, Monteagle Lane, Yateley, GU46 6LU

Candidates are entitled to visit each polling station in the electoral area where they are standing as a candidate to observe proceedings. Candidates should notify the Presiding Officer at the station on their arrival.

Verification and Count

The verification (all ballot papers) and count (District and Parish ballot papers) will be held at Hart Leisure Centre, Emerald Avenue, Fleet GU51 5EE immediately following the close of polls on Thursday, 2 May 2024.

All candidates will be invited to attend the count. Candidates will be contacted if the election is contested, to confirm the number of counting agents they are entitled to appoint. Please note that the statutory deadline for notifying the Returning Officer with the details of counting agents will be **5pm, Thursday, 25 April 2024.**

Election Expenses

Every candidate must complete and return a statement of all expenses.

Expenses Limits

The spending limit for the election period is **£960**, plus **8p** per local government elector in the electoral area the candidate is standing.

The electorate used to calculate the amounts will be circulated to candidates and agents once it is finalised.

Submitting Expenses Returns

The documents must be handed into the Returning Officer, together with the bills and receipts within 35 calendar days after the election. The deadline for the completed expenses return is **Thursday, 6 June 2024.**

The form of return and the candidate declaration will be supplied to all candidates.

Please note:

- **all candidates must submit an expenses return - even if they are not elected**
- **an expenses return must still be made, even if no expenditure has been incurred (a 'nil' return).**

More information is available at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Electoral Offences

There are a number of specific electoral offences and some general offences which candidates, agents and supporters should be particularly aware of during their campaign. More information is available at the www.electoralcommission.org.uk and the Code of Conduct for Campaigners is available at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/code-conduct-campaigners-uk-parliamentary-general-elections-great-britain-local-elections-england.

Bribery

Giving directly or indirectly, any money or gift or procure any office to or for any voter, in order to induce any voter to vote or refrain from voting, or for a particular candidate.

Treating

Giving or providing (or paying wholly or in part the expense of giving or providing) either before, during or after an election, directly or indirectly, any food, drink, entertainment or provision in order to influence any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

Undue Influence

Making use or threatening to make use directly or indirectly, of force, violence or restraint, or inflict or threaten to inflict injury, damage or harm in order to induce or compel any voter to vote or refrain from voting. A person may also be guilty of undue influence if they act with the intention of impeding or preventing the voter from freely exercising their right to vote.

Personation

It is an offence for any individual to vote as someone else (whether that person is living or dead or is a fictitious person), either by post or in person at a polling station as an elector or as a proxy. Further, the individual voting can be deemed to be guilty of personation if they vote as a person they have reasonable grounds for supposing is dead or fictitious, or where they have reasonable grounds for supposing their appointment as a proxy is no longer in force.

False registration information and false postal/proxy voting application

It is an offence to supply false information on a registration, postal vote or proxy vote application form. False information includes a false signature.

False application to vote by post or by proxy

A person is guilty of an offence if they apply to vote by post or proxy to gain a vote to which they are not entitled or to deprive someone else of their vote.

Multiple Voting

It is an offence to vote twice at the same election.

Postal Vote Handling

It is an offence for candidates and their supporters to handle completed ballot papers or postal ballot packs for voters who are not close family or someone they care for.

Secrecy Requirements

Every person attending a polling station, postal vote opening session or the counting of the votes must be aware of the secrecy requirements, as set out in Section 66 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

These provisions concern the maintaining of secrecy of the voting and should be read carefully before anyone attends at any polling station, postal vote opening session or at the counting of the votes.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 1983

Section 66, sub-sections (1 - 6)

- (1) The following persons:-
 - a. every Returning Officer and every Presiding Officer or clerk attending at a polling station;
 - b. every candidate or election agent or polling agent so attending,
 - c. every person so attending by virtue of any of sections 6A to 6D of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000
 - d. shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of voting and shall not, except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate to any person before the poll is closed any information as to –
 - i. the name of any elector or proxy for an elector who has or has not applied for a ballot paper or voted at a polling station;
 - ii. the number on the register of electors of any elector who, or whose proxy, has or has not applied for a ballot paper or voted at a polling station; or
 - iii. the official mark.
- (2) Every person attending at the counting of the votes shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of voting and shall not -
 - a. ascertain or attempt to ascertain at the counting of the votes the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper;
 - b. communicate any information obtained at the counting of the votes as to the candidate for whom any vote is given on any particular ballot paper.
- (3) No person shall -
 - a. interfere with or attempt to interfere with a voter when recording his vote;
 - b. otherwise obtain or attempt to obtain in a polling station information as to the candidate for whom a voter in that station is about to vote or has voted;
 - c. communicate at any time to any person any information obtained in a polling station as to the candidate for whom a voter in that station is about to vote or has voted, or as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given to a voter at that station;
 - d. directly or indirectly induce a voter to display his ballot paper after he has marked it so as to make known to any person the name of the candidate for whom he has or has not voted.
- (3A) No person may—
 - a. except for some purpose authorised by law, obtain or attempt to obtain information, or communicate at any time to any other person any information, as to the number or

- other unique identifying mark on the back of a ballot paper sent to a person for voting by post at a relevant election;
 - b. except for some purpose authorised by law, obtain or attempt to obtain information, or communicate at any time to any other person any information, as to the official mark on a ballot paper sent to a person for voting by post at a relevant election;
 - c. obtain or attempt to obtain information, in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (3B), as to the candidate for whom a person voting by post at a relevant election (“V”) is about to vote or has voted;
 - d. communicate at any time to any other person information obtained in contravention of paragraph (c).
- (3B) The circumstances referred to in subsection (3A)(c) are where V is about to mark, is in the process of marking, or has just marked, a ballot paper sent to V for voting by post at the election.
- (3C) But—
 - a. a person (“E”) who is voting by proxy does not contravene subsection (3A) by obtaining or attempting to obtain from the person appointed as E’s proxy information as to a matter mentioned in paragraph (a) or (c) of that subsection that relates to E’s vote, and
 - b. a person who is appointed as proxy for an elector does not contravene subsection (3A) by communicating to that elector information as to a matter mentioned in paragraph (a) or (c) of that subsection that relates to that elector’s vote.
- (3D) Subsection (3A)(c) and (d) does not apply where the purpose (or main purpose) for which the information is sought or communicated is its use for the purposes of—
 - a. a published statement relating to the way in which voters intend to vote or have voted at the relevant election, or
 - b. a published forecast as to the result of that election which is based on information given by voters.
- (3E) In subsection (3D)—
 - a. “forecast” includes estimate;
 - b. “published” means made available to the public at large or to any section of the public, in whatever form and by whatever means;
 - c. the reference to the result of the relevant election is a reference to the result of the election either as a whole or so far as any particular candidate or candidates at the election is or are concerned.
- (3F) A person voting as proxy for an elector at a relevant election—
 - a. must not communicate at any time to any person other than that elector any information as to the candidate for whom the person is about to vote, or has voted, as proxy for that elector;
 - b. except for some purpose authorised by law, must not communicate at any time to any person other than that elector the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of a ballot paper sent or delivered to the person for voting as proxy for that elector.
- (4) Every person attending the proceedings in connection with the issue or the receipt of ballot papers for persons voting by post shall maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting and shall not –
 - a. except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate, before the poll is closed, to any person any information obtained at those proceedings as to the official mark; or
 - b. except for some purpose authorised by law, communicate to any person at any time any information obtained at those proceedings as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper sent to any person; or

- a. except for some purpose authorised by law, attempt to ascertain at the proceedings in connection with the receipt of ballot papers the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper; or
 - b. attempt to ascertain at the proceedings in connection with the receipt of the ballot papers the candidate for whom any vote is given in any particular ballot paper or communicate any information with respect thereto obtain at those proceedings.
- (4A) No person having undertaken to assist a relevant voter to vote at a relevant election may communicate at any time to any person except that voter any information as to—
- a. the candidate for whom the voter intends to vote or has voted, or
 - b. the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given for the use of the voter.
- (4B) In subsection (4A) “relevant voter” means a voter who is blind, has another disability, or is unable to read.
- (5) No person having undertaken to assist a blind voter to vote shall communicate at any time to any person any information as to the candidate for whom that voter intends to vote or has voted, or as to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper given for the use of that voter.
- (6) If any person acts in contravention of this section, he shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months.
- (6A) In this section, “relevant election” means—
- a. a parliamentary election, or
 - b. an election in England under the local government Act.
- (7) In their application in relation to an election of the London members of the London Assembly at an ordinary election, the preceding provisions of this section shall have effect with the insertion, after the words “the candidate for whom”, in each place where they occur, of “, or the registered political party towards the return of whose candidates,”.
- (8) In relation to an election of the London members of the London Assembly at an ordinary election, any reference in this section to the return of a registered political party’s candidates is a reference to the return of candidates included in the list of candidates submitted by the registered political party for the purposes of the election.

Request for the Register of Electors

Candidates are entitled to request one free copy of the Register of Electors for the appropriate electoral area. This form should be completed by the candidate and submitted to the Electoral Registration Officer at Hart District Council. This can be emailed to **elections@hart.gov.uk**

Name of Candidate	
Date of Election	2 May 2024
Ward	
Data Copy (Excel) or Paper Copy	

I declare that I am a candidate at the above-named election. I will use my copy of the electoral register for electoral purposes and checking the validity of donations only. I will only allow others who are assisting me in my campaign to use my copy of the electoral register for the same purposes only. I understand that any use other than electoral or donation checking purposes is illegal with a maximum fine of £5,000. My request is for the register as at the last date for Notice of Election and any revisions or notices of amendment while I am a candidate.

Signed:	
Date:	

Please send the Register to the following address/email address:	
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Contact Details (in case of query)	
Telephone:	
Email:	

Disposal of Register of Electors

Under current data protection legislation, personal data processed for any purpose shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose. If candidates request, and are supplied with, the Register of Electors as a candidate, they will need ensure the secure destruction of the data following the election.

Hard copies of the Register of Electors, if requested, can be returned to the Electoral Registration Officer at Hart District Council for disposal. Data copies should be deleted from any device where it has been stored.