

# Tallying votes at the count

*by David Newman, Oxfordshire Green Party*

When the ballot boxes are opened, and the votes counted face up, that is our chance to find out where Green voters are (at the level of the ballot box in a polling station). It has two purposes:

1. In places where we haven't canvassed this year, we can find promising areas to canvass for the next election.
2. In places where we have canvassed extensively, we can work out the conversion factor: what % of promised votes make it to the ballot paper?

## **Verification stage of the count**

The initial face up count takes place during the verification stage, when elections staff check that the number of ballot papers matches the number of people who voted according to the polling station records. The counters sit one side of a table, the appointed verification agents from all the parties stand on the other side. While they are counting, we can make a note of how many votes there are for each candidate in a small sample of ballot papers.

## **Tallying sheets**

I have designed tallying sheets for some of the 2021 elections. Feel free to modify them to use in other districts. Please print out a few copies and take them along to the verification you are attending.

How do you fill them in? When a ballot box is opened and poured out on a table, the counters start picking ballots from the pile, counting them, and putting them into neat stacks. As they count, you can put a simple mark like this: | in the working area next to the candidates name for every X marked. Keep on going until you have marked the votes for a sample of ballots. There is no need to record all the votes in a box.

In using a tally sheet at verification there are 8 things to remember.

1. Find out and write down the ballot box number. That tells us where the voters vote and live. It is called out when a box is opened, is written on the side of the box, and written down on a slip of paper by the counters who leave it somewhere on the table where they are counting.
2. Do a sample of about 100 if you have time, but 50 is good enough if lots of boxes are being opened, as we don't want to miss a single box.
3. There is time to watch one fast or two slow counters, as they count the votes face up, and write down marks against each candidate as the vote is counted. But make sure that two of us are not counting the same pile.
4. Write marks in the working area, like so: |||| | |||||. Do not cross the lines with another, as it is too easy to make mistakes. Just put down a mark for every vote for each candidate.
5. Do not just record Green votes. We need an unbiased random sample of ballots.
6. Once you have your sample counted, don't hang around, but look for the next box being opened.
7. When there are lulls, count the marks in the working area and write down the totals.
8. Before you leave, or when a sheet is full, hand it in to the person who is going to analyse the tallies.