

Procedures and guidance for Policy and Steering Committee elections 2020

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The committee elections shall be conducted in a fair, open and transparent manner. The procedures shall ensure that each candidate has equal access to the eligible electorate and has equal treatment in all other matters pertaining to the election.
2. The returning officer is Eileen Scholes and the deputy returning officer is Marta Brebner. They can be contacted by emailing on returning.officer@womensequality.org.uk
3. The returning officer(s) shall be independent and impartial at all times.
4. Candidates are not required to run a campaign, or undertake any activities beyond the requirements set out below. The rules cover any activities candidates may decide to undertake in support of their candidacy.

ELIGIBILITY

5. Candidates for the Policy Committee and the Steering Committee must be members of the Party at the time of their submission to the returning officer.
6. Candidates for the Policy Committee cannot hold another position on the Policy Committee (and risk leaving another position vacant after the election).
7. Candidates for both committees can hold any other officer positions within the Party, and may run for election to both committees in parallel if they so choose.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND TIMESCALE

8. All candidates must supply:
 - a. a photo for publication:
 - i. Head and shoulders must be in view
 - ii. The background of the photo must be plain but can be an office or room
 - iii. Any text, logos or other persons are not permitted to appear in the photo
 - b. a film for publication:
 - i. Length: Maximum 2 minutes (anything that exceeds this will not be posted).

- ii. File type: .mov or .mp4 (other file types will not be posted).
 - iii. Format: Recommended to film in landscape, against a plain background.
 - c. a short statement:
 - i. Length: Maximum 200 words.
 - ii. Style: Written in the first person (anything written in the third person will not be posted).
 - d. your social media handles (if you wish to use these to support your campaign).
 - e. An Equalities monitoring form, which will not be made publicly available and is for internal monitoring purposes only.
- 9. All submissions must be received by 23:59 on Thursday 24 September, sent electronically to returning.officer@womensequality.org.uk.
- 10. Should any candidate wish to withdraw, they must put this in writing via email to the Returning Officer(s) by 23:59 on Wednesday 30 September by emailing: returning.officer@womensequality.org.uk
- 11. The Returning Officer(s) will invalidate any candidate who fails to meet the criteria for standing by 23:59 on Tuesday 29 September.
- 12. All nominations will remain valid once submitted unless the nominated candidate fails to meet their obligations set out above or has withdrawn their nomination in writing to the Returning Officer(s) by the date set out above. Validly nominated candidates will go through to the ballot.
- 13. In the event that only one candidate puts themselves forward for any of the Policy Committee posts, or only five candidates for the Steering Committee posts, there will not be a ballot and, absent any compelling reason to the contrary, the candidate/s will be appointed to the post.
- 14. The election period begins when the ballot opens and ends when the ballot closes. The ballot period is from 9 a.m. on Sunday 18 October 2020 until Monday 16 November 2020 23:59.
- 15. Voting will be online and arbitrated independently by UK Engage, and we will announce the successful candidate on or before Wednesday 18 November 2020.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES WHO ARE EXISTING OFFICE HOLDERS

- 16. During the election period, candidates who are existing WE office holders must carry on their essential business.

17. During the election period, candidates who are existing office holders may court as much publicity as possible for their candidacy as long as they do so in their capacity as candidates:

- a. during election-related media or events; and
- b. independent of their WE office; and
- c. according to the rules for candidates; and
- d. independent of any official WE work or volunteering that is not election-related.

18. During the election period, candidates who are existing office holders may cite their record of achievement for WE in election communications and in specifically election-related publicity, but while they are working or volunteering for WE in ways that are not election-related may not:

- a. discuss their candidacy; or
- b. use their office to give them greater visibility than their competitors or any form of electoral advantage.

If asked about their candidacy during the normal course of WE work or volunteering, they may offer to give an election-related interview at another time.

19. In the same way, non-office holding candidates who are WE volunteers may not use their normal WE volunteering as a platform for their election.

SEQUESTRATION PERIOD

20. Sequestration is the sensitive period during an election during which particular care should be taken not to undertake any activity that could call into question the impartiality of the Party or the election process.

21. The sequestration period will take effect during the 30 days of the ballot period. In this period especially, as well as during the whole election period, WE have to make sure that the electoral process is fair, transparent, open and beyond reproach.

22. The ballot period is from 9 a.m. on Sunday 18 October 2020 until Monday 16 November 2020 23:59.

23. Sequestration restrictions apply:

- a. to candidates who are existing office holders;
- b. to all staff;

- c. to election officials;
- d. to anyone who holds an office, paid or unpaid, in WE, including the Party leader, any Branch Appointed Officer, any Hub Appointed Officer, Executive Committee member, Steering Committee member, Policy Committee member, Appeals Body member, and anyone co-opted to any of these committees;
- e. to all forms of publicity;
- f. to any decision-making that has any bearing at all on the election or its outcome
- g. except in an emergency. An emergency is any exceptional event that requires the presence of the Party leader or other office holder to speak for the Party, such as a national emergency. The Elections Sub-Committee (“ESC”) must decide whether an event qualifies as an emergency, not the office holder.

24. During the sequestration period, candidates who are existing office holders:

- a. may make decisions on WE’s behalf in the normal course of their work or volunteering that is not election-related; but
- b. may not represent the Party in their capacity as an office holder in case it gives them publicity related to their election;
- c. if it is not possible to carry out their normal work or volunteering without the election impinging on it, must do other work or volunteering until the sequestration period is over

REQUIREMENTS FOR OFFICE HOLDERS

25. During the election period, office holders must not use their normal WE work or volunteering as a platform for expressing their preference for any candidate, or to influence voters.

26. During the election period, office holders may express their preference for a candidate as long as they do so in their capacity as individual members:

- a. during election-related media or events; and
- b. independent of their WE office; and
- c. according to the Code of Conduct; and
- d. independent of any official WE work or volunteering that is not election-related.

27. Office holders must not accept financial inducement, gifts or treats from candidates in exchange for support.

28. During the election period, office holders must not facilitate or provide access to the WE database for any candidate or those working on their election campaign.
29. Anyone found providing access to the WE database for any candidate or those working on their election campaign will have their WE database access suspended indefinitely by decision of the Returning Officer(s).
30. During the election period, office holders should not answer questions on behalf of, or regarding, candidates even where those candidates belong to their branch, hub or committee. They should refer the questioner to that candidate.
31. During the election period, office holders must be impartial in all mentions of candidates on Party social media channels and all other forms of Party communication related to the officer elections.
32. During the election period, office holders may organise election-related events. Office holders should aim to give equal platform and mention to each of the candidates. Office holders can contact candidates via the Returning Officer(s) by emailing the Returning Officer(s) at returning.officer@womensequality.org.uk.

RULES FOR CANDIDATES

33. Candidates or persons acting on behalf of a candidate must not use their own material, access to publicity or any media outlets to disparage any other candidate. Bullying, defamation, harassment or intimidation of any kind by candidates or persons acting on behalf of candidates shall not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the terms of the Constitution.
34. Candidates or persons acting on behalf of a candidate who are existing WE office holders cannot use their office to promote their candidacy.
35. No financial inducement, gifts or treats to local branches, regional or national hubs, WE officeholders, staff, election officials, Members or Registered Supporters may be offered in an effort to secure support.
36. A contact list for Members and Registered Supporters will not be provided to any candidate. Candidates or those campaigning on their behalf may not access or use the WE database during the election period for election purposes.
37. An aspiring candidate, or someone who publicly supports any of the candidates, may not attend any WE discussions that deal with the administration of the election unless specifically invited by the returning

officer(s).

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE RETURNING OFFICER(S) DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD

38. The returning officer is Eileen Scholes. The deputy returning officer is Marta Brebner.
39. The returning officer(s) may not indicate any preference for any candidate at any time, and must be seen to be completely impartial throughout the whole election process.
40. The returning officer(s) must treat all candidates fairly and ensure they are each afforded the same opportunities, including:
 - a. access to available resources from WE as appropriate; and
 - b. access and reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates.
 - c. This includes being wholly impartial in conversations, interviews, on social media and in all correspondence.
41. They will keep the proceedings of the returning officer(s) confidential at all times.
42. They will keep the candidates' financial and personal information confidential at all times, and will not publish these or refer to them except with the WE finance team where necessary for the electoral process.
43. However, in any report to WE Central Office, the Steering Committee or Conference, they may supply non-personally identifiable aggregated information.
44. The returning officer(s) will ensure the election is run in a free, fair, impartial and transparent manner, with honesty and integrity, in conjunction with the election provider, UK Engage.

PARTY SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES

45. The Party will publish all candidate photos, films and short statements on an external website, and publicise the site to members.

CANDIDATE SPENDING AND REPORTING

46. Candidates are regulated by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 ("PPERA 2000") and are required to fully comply with the rules for

accepting and reporting donations.

47. Candidates in this election are defined as 'regulated donees' under schedule 7 of PPERA 2000; therefore donations made to them in connection with their political activities – including seeking election to a position within the party – are regulated.
48. Donations (cash or in kind) of more than £500 are controlled. A regulated donee can only accept donations of more than £500 from permissible donors or lenders. PPERA 2000 defines permissible donors as:
 - a. An individual on a UK electoral register;
 - b. A UK registered political party;
 - c. A UK registered and trading company;
 - d. A UK registered trade union;
 - e. A UK registered building society;
 - f. A UK registered Limited Liability partnership;
 - g. A UK registered friendly/building society;
 - h. A UK based unincorporated association.
49. Donations must be checked for permissibility within 30 days of receipt. There is no 30-day grace period. It is an offence to accept donations of more than £500 from an impermissible source. In addition, donations of more than £500 must not be accepted from anonymous or unidentifiable sources.
50. Donations of more than £500 from impermissible sources must be returned to the donor and reported to the Electoral Commission within 30 days of receipt. Impermissible donations which cannot be returned must be sent to the Electoral Commission.
51. A cap on all cash expenditure, resources and donations in kind will be set at £1,000.
52. The cap will include:
 - a. Advertising and unsolicited materials of any kind, for example, leaflets, posters, websites or videos, including production costs for the candidate video statement.
 - b. Transport costs, for example, hire cars or public transport for the candidate and/or their agent.
 - c. Meetings and events held to promote the candidate's campaign that are not organised by WE Central Office.
 - d. Administrative costs, for example, stationery, photocopying, and phone costs.

53. All associated costs of each activity will also be included in the spending cap. For example, the design, photography and distribution cost of producing leaflets will be included.

54. The cap will not include:

- a. anything appearing in a newspaper or licensed broadcast channel that is not an advert.
- b. written candidate statements for the candidate profiles.
- c. volunteers who are not paid for their time.
- d. the use of someone's personal car so long as that car is not loaned exclusively to the candidate for their campaign.
- e. the use of someone's main residence, provided free of charge.
- f. computer equipment bought for the candidate's personal use.

55. Any surplus in total cash donations received to support the campaign for any candidate shall be paid to the Women's Equality Party with the submission of the return of election expenses.

56. Candidates are required to document income throughout their campaign, a form for submitting an expense return will be provided to all candidates.

57. The regulated period for candidate spending on this election begins on the date the candidate announces their intention to stand or when a candidate submits their photo, video and statement to the returning officer(s), whichever is sooner.

58. Any breach of this Code of Conduct will be reported to the returning officer(s) by the Treasurer. The decision of the returning officer(s) will be final.

VOTING ELIGIBILITY

59. Full and affiliate members whose membership has not expired when the ballot opens will be eligible to vote.

60. The deadline for joining the party in order to vote is one week before the ballot closes. However, any members joining after the ballot opens must take out an annual membership, paying by card, in order to be eligible to take part in the election, as the bank cannot process any other form of membership before the ballot closes.

BALLOT

61. Online ballots will be issued to members by UK engage, the independent scrutineer.
62. Candidates will be published in random order.
63. Voters can vote for one person for each vacant position.
64. The Steering Committee will advise when the ballot will be open. Voters should follow instructions sent by email.
65. The Steering Committee will advise when the ballot will close.

THE COUNT

66. UK engage will count the votes on the day after the ballot closes.
67. In accordance with Article 7.6.1 of the constitution, candidates will be elected by a simple majority.
68. In accordance with Article 7.5.12 of the constitution, Steering Committee candidates will be elected by a simple majority.
69. The successful candidates will be announced by the returning officer at the latest three days after the ballot closes.