



Island-Wide Voting – the First Policy Letter

Guernsey is changing the way it chooses its government (the States of Guernsey) in 2020. The States' Assembly and Constitution Committee (SACC) is responsible for making sure that arrangements are in place for the General Election to take place successfully. This is the Committee's first policy letter, and it covers changes to the Election law (the Reform (Guernsey) Law, 1948) which need to be made as soon as possible. Other recommendations, which don't require law changes, will be included in a second policy letter later this year.

If the States approves SACC's policy letter, the following will be put in place ahead of the General Election in 2020:

The Election

- There will be one island-wide vote for all 38 Deputies. Everyone will be able to vote for up to 38 people.
- Election Day will take place on Wednesday 17 June, 2020.
- There will be a range of options to vote in advance, including the option to vote by post, voting at an advance polling station in the week before Election Day and a full day of polling on Tuesday 16 June, 2020.
- It won't be possible to vote online this time around, but we're looking at electronic options to help manage the Electoral Roll and the vote count.

Voters

- Everyone aged 16 and above, who has lived in Guernsey for the required period of time, will be entitled to vote.
- Anyone who wants to vote will need to sign up to the Electoral Roll, which will open between November 2019 and April 2020. Even people who've voted before need to re-register. There will be information available on how people can do this.
- The public Electoral Roll will contain full names and addresses of voters. Voters may be asked to give their date of birth, but this will only be used to check duplicate records and won't be published.
- People with no fixed address will be able to sign up to the Electoral Roll by providing an address where they regularly spend time.
- People who don't want their address on a public register for reasons of safety will be able to apply to go on a 'closed' Electoral Roll.
- The Committee *for* Home Affairs is responsible for organising the Electoral Roll, and has submitted a separate policy letter explaining its plans.

Candidates

- People will be able to stand as Deputies from **age 18** (not 20, as at present).
- Candidates will need to meet residency requirements, and must not have been sentenced to a prison sentence (of six months or more) in the past five years. We are also adding a requirement that candidates must be on the Electoral Roll.

- Candidates must be nominated and seconded by two people who are on the Electoral Roll. We are not changing requirements in terms of the number of people who have to nominate or second a candidate, and candidates won't have to pay a deposit.

Key Dates

- Nominations will open at 12 noon on Tuesday 12 May, 2020 and close at **4pm** on Friday 15 May, 2020.
- Election Day will be Wednesday 17 June, 2020. There'll be the opportunity to vote at an advance polling station in the week before, including over the weekend.
- States Members will be sworn in at the end of June.
- Elections for Committee Presidents and Members will take place in four meetings from 1 July to 10 July, 2020, starting with the President of Policy & Resources.
- The first main States Meeting will take place on 28 July (Accounts) and 29 July (General business). The summer recess is likely to be short, with the next States Meeting likely to be held on 2 September, 2020.

Voting

- People who vote in person on 16 or 17 June, 2020 will either have to vote in their parishes or at a 'super polling station' (a polling station where anyone from any district can vote). This is to help manage potentially large numbers of voters (and long queues).
- People will also have the opportunity to vote at an advance polling station in the week before Election Day.
- Polling stations will be established by the Registrar-General of Electors but the Committee hopes that, as far as possible, the Douzaines will continue to be involved in the Election.
- Anyone eligible to vote is entitled to a postal vote. We're changing the rules so that postal votes can be returned by hand on 17 June, 2020 as well as in the post.
- The provisions of the Secret Ballot Law (an 1899 law written in French) will be included in the main Election law (the Reform (Guernsey) Law, 1948).

Vote Count

- If every voter on the Electoral Roll casts all 38 votes, there could be over 1.2 million votes cast in this Election.
- If possible, votes will be counted electronically. But there will have to be a manual back-up option in case technology fails.
- The rules for recounts will stay the same: if there's a gap of 2% or less in the votes of a person who's not elected and someone who is, the unsuccessful candidate can call for a recount. There will be one recount and its results will be final.
- If there is a tie for the 38th seat, the tie may be broken by drawing lots.

Parties

- Political parties will be defined in law, based on the Venice Commission's definition of a political party, and will have to follow rules in relation to election spending and support for candidates.
- Any party which promotes one or more candidates for election will be required to register as a political party.

- A registration process for parties will be established before the Election.
- Candidates will be allowed to allocate up to 50% of their spending allowance to their party, to spend on their behalf. Parties won't be allowed any additional spending in the Election period beyond this.

Spending and Donations

- Election spending rules will apply to any spending by candidates or parties during the 'regulated period', which will run from the day nominations open until Election Day. The rules will also apply to materials prepared earlier for use during the 'regulated period'.
- Spending guidance will be published, based on the approach used for the 2018 Referendum and guidance from the UK Electoral Commission.
- There will be a cap on how much candidates can spend on their election campaign.
- Parties will not have a separate spending allowance. However, candidates will be able to transfer up to 50% of their spending allowance to their party (if they have one).
- This policy letter doesn't include recommendations about what the spending limit should be, or any government grants or benefits-in-kind that will be offered to candidates. SACC is inviting public feedback and suggestions, and will make recommendations in its next policy letter, later in 2019.
- Candidates and parties will not be allowed to accept anonymous donations, or donations from organisations or people outside of Guernsey, who are not eligible to be on the Electoral Roll.
- Any donations worth £50 or more must be declared by the candidate.

Other Provisions

- A by-election will only be called if two or more seats in the States have become vacant.
- The law will be changed to allow international observers to oversee the election, to make sure that it is free and fair. This is needed to help ensure confidence in the new, island-wide approach.

Next Steps

- SACC will bring a second policy letter later in 2019. This will cover some of the practical elements of the next Election that don't require changes to the Law. This is likely to include:
 - How much candidates are allowed to spend on their campaigns;
 - Any grants or other support the States will provide to candidates;
 - What the ballot paper will look like;
 - What will happen during the election period (e.g. hustings?);
 - Communication plans, to encourage people to get involved with the next Election.
- The next policy letter will also include a request for any budget the Committee needs to deliver the election, which might include the costs of polling stations, communications, vote counting technology, and/or election observers, among other things.