

# the **BALLOT** **PAPER**



YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE



## A celebrity in our midst

**If you have already had a chance to look at our website you may have seen the animated guides in the elections checklist on the far right-hand side. But have you listened to the new voiceovers?**

Sir Trevor McDonald OBE has recorded voiceovers to accompany our four guides, which explain how to vote and how the results are calculated.

Sir Trevor's recognisable and trusted voice is a fantastic addition to our website. Voters logging on to the site now can watch the short clips and hear him clearly explain how to vote in person and by post and how the Mayor and the London Assembly will be elected.

Sir Trevor is a renowned broadcaster and was Britain's first black TV news anchorman. His clear, confident delivery and serious attitude have made him one of TV's most trusted reporters and he has won more awards than any other British broadcaster.

Sir Trevor has also recorded the script for the electronic counting video, which will go live on the site in early 2008.

In January Sir Trevor is returning to ITV News and ITN to present the relaunched ITV News at Ten with Julie Etchingham.



### Contingency planning

**What would happen if there was a flood in London on the day of the election?**

This was one of the scenarios London Elects had to consider when they got together for a day of contingency planning for the election.

The team looked at a number of different scenarios and discussed how to deal with them. The day was a great success and the plans arrived at are now part of the London Elects risk register.

### JANUARY 2008

A CELEBRITY  
IN OUR MIDST

CONTINGENCY  
PLANNING

FOCUS ON:  
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BECOMING A  
CANDIDATE

THE ROLE OF THE  
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THE ORGANISATIONS  
INVOLVED IN THE  
ELECTION AND  
THEIR ROLES

# FOCUS ON: REGISTRATION

The Ballot Paper talks to Matt Bright, Communications Manager, about how London Elects is raising awareness of voter registration.



The forms are available from your borough council or you can download them from our website [www.londonelects.org.uk](http://www.londonelects.org.uk)

## What are you doing to raise awareness of registration?

We're taking electoral registration really seriously. We've joined forces with The Electoral Commission and together we're running the biggest registration advertising campaign ever seen in London. The adverts started to appear in January and will continue to run right up to the registration deadline on 16 April.

## As well as advertising how else are you promoting registration?

Advertising is just one part of our overall campaign. There'll be lots of leaflets and articles in the media, and there's our website, [www.londonelects.org.uk](http://www.londonelects.org.uk) of course.

## Are you working with any stakeholders?

Working with stakeholders is really, really important for helping us get as many people on the register as possible. We'll be stepping up our programme of briefing stakeholders in January. Some groups of under-registered people can be mistrustful of "official" information, so we're hoping to recruit "ambassadors" to help spread the message. We're happy to give out information, posters, and leaflets – in several languages. Please get in touch if you'd like to help or have a great idea!

## How many people are not on the electoral register?

It's impossible to give an exact figure but, according to research and from talking to the boroughs, it could be anywhere between half a million and one million people. Even if you just take the lower number, that's still far, far too many.

## Who is responsible for promoting electoral registration?

The law changed in 2006, giving the Greater London Returning Officer a duty to promote registration. Other bodies have to promote registration too, like the Electoral Commission and the London boroughs, which are also in charge of keeping the register up-to-date.

## Why do people need to register to vote?

It's simple – if you are not on the electoral register, you cannot vote. If you want to vote, don't let not being on the register stop you. To vote in the London Mayor and Assembly elections, you must register by 16 April 2008. All you need to do is fill in and sign a simple form, then send it to your local council. It's easy and doesn't take long.

## GLRO FOREWORD

Welcome to the fourth edition of The Ballot Paper – London Elects' newsletter.

This month we introduce a celebrity to the website – Sir Trevor McDonald OBE has kindly recorded voiceovers for our interactive guides. Log on to the site to hear his clear explanations of how to vote and how the results of the election will be calculated.

Also in this edition we interview Matt Bright, Communications Manager, who details what London Elects is doing to encourage more people of all ages to register to vote. We encourage everyone eligible to register now so they can vote on 1 May.

Our quick guide to the key organisations involved in the election explains the role each will play, and we present a more in depth explanation of the work the boroughs will do in the run up to, and on, 1 May.

Finally we report on two successful meetings held by the London Elects team – a day of contingency planning for the London elections and the first Candidates Forum which was held in November.

Suggestions for features in future editions of the Ballot Paper are welcomed.

**Anthony Mayer**  
Greater London Returning Officer



# BECOMING A CANDIDATE

**The 2008 election will be the third election for the Mayor of London and the London Assembly and interest and knowledge in the contest is growing.**

In the last few months we have had more than 100 enquiries from people considering standing in May.

Everyone who had expressed an interest in standing either as Mayor or for the London Assembly was invited to attend a Candidates Forum in November. The aim of the Forum was to explain all the different processes candidates must complete to stand in the election.

London Elects explained the nomination process – which papers need to be filled out and which deposits are required, while The Electoral Commission presented information on the financial side of standing – election expenses and donations.

Candidates must submit a nomination form, a consent to nomination form and a deposit by 12pm on 28 March 2008 before they can officially be named as a candidate.

The deposits vary depending on the contest. Candidates for Mayor must pay a £10,000 deposit, which is returned if they get 5% of the first choice votes. Each Mayoral candidate must also get 330 nominations – 10 signatures from each borough and the City of London from people on the new electoral register – to support their application.

People who want to stand as a Constituency Assembly Member must pay a £1,000 deposit, which is returned if they get 5% of the total number of votes cast in their constituency. Independent candidates and political parties for the London-wide list must pay £5,000. This is returnable if the party or independent candidate receives more than 2.5% of the total votes across London.

London Elects will publish the official list of candidates on 2 April 2008.

For more information about standing as a candidate contact us on 020 7983 4444 or [candidates@londonelects.org.uk](mailto:candidates@londonelects.org.uk)

## The role of the London boroughs

**London's borough councils play a vital role in the election but what exactly do they do to get ready for a London Mayor and Assembly election?**

Each borough is responsible for the organisation of the election locally – setting up and running the polling stations, sending out poll cards and postal votes, looking after and counting the ballot papers.

Every year, each authority writes to all of its residents and updates the electoral register. This process is known as the annual canvass.

As well as compiling the register, this year the boroughs have reviewed their polling stations to make sure they are in the right place and still suitable to use.

Running the polling stations is a big job: there are over 3,000 across London – some boroughs have more than 150 – and each needs at least three staff. From January, boroughs will be recruiting and training staff to work in the polling stations – over 12,000 people altogether.

The date of the election, 1 May 2008, is set in law and cannot be changed, so borough electoral services teams have to work to a very strict timetable.

The election process formally starts on 18 March when the Notice of Election is published. After this, boroughs will start to print and send poll cards to all of their registered voters. There can be as many as a quarter of a million voters in the biggest boroughs. Poll cards are sent out right up to the election as people can still register to vote as late as 16 April.

Once the candidates are known on 2 April and the ballot papers are printed, attention will turn to postal voters. Anyone on the register can have a postal vote. In 2004, just over 250,000 Londoners had a postal vote but this number is likely to be much higher for 2008 – perhaps more than twice as many as in 2004.

Sending all these postal votes out will be a real challenge for boroughs since each pack is personally addressed and will contain three separate ballot papers. To make sure the votes are safe and secure, boroughs then have to check the signature and date of birth on the returned postal votes. And of course, the secrecy of the voters' intention must be kept throughout the whole process.

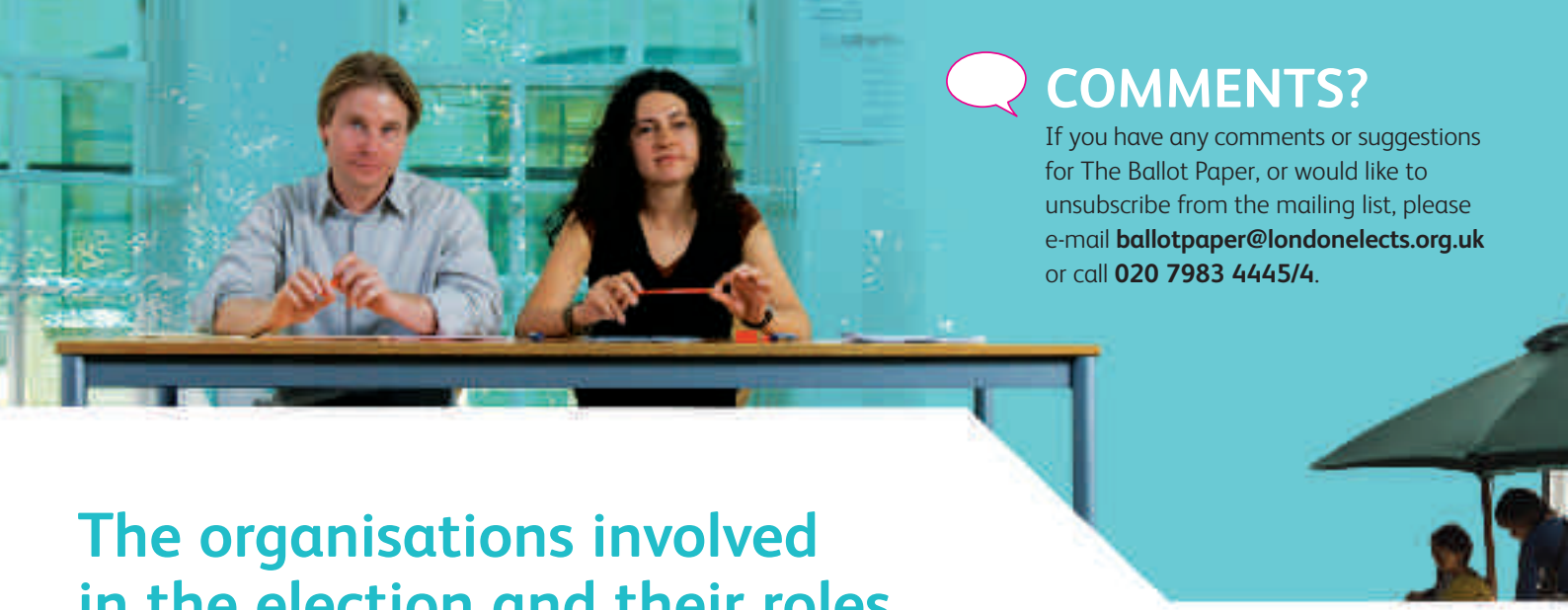
A week before polling day all the equipment needed in the polling station will be sent out – from stationery to polling booths and signs. The ballot boxes and ballot papers have to be secure at all times and are hand delivered to the Presiding Officer in each station.

Election day itself is always very busy and stressful as every polling place opens at 7am and will not close until 10pm. After the polls close all the ballot boxes will be taken securely to the town hall before being brought to one of the three count centres for counting the next morning.

The count starts at 8.30am on 2 May. Staff recruited and trained by the boroughs, operate the electronic counting system and adjudicate ballot papers.

After the returning officers have declared the results, there's still a lot to do. All the equipment needs to be collected and put away, and any sensitive information must be stored securely. Finally each borough will review how the election went, what they did well and what they could improve.

To make sure everything goes smoothly, and to ensure there is consistency across the city, London Elects works closely with all the London boroughs, especially on training the polling station staff.



## COMMENTS?

If you have any comments or suggestions for The Ballot Paper, or would like to unsubscribe from the mailing list, please e-mail [ballotpaper@londonelects.org.uk](mailto:ballotpaper@londonelects.org.uk) or call **020 7983 4445/4**.

# The organisations involved in the election and their roles

**Organising an election is more complicated than most people realise, and needs a lot of people and time. There are many organisations involved in the election for the Mayor of London and London Assembly, from the Government, which drafts the election rules, to the boroughs, which are responsible for setting up the polling stations.**

Below we describe the main organisations and what role they play.

### Ministry of Justice

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is the government department responsible for elections. It is responsible for writing electoral law and putting it into practice, including the 2006 Electoral Administration Act, which made a lot of changes to how elections are run.

As well as the election for the London Mayor and Assembly, the MoJ covers all other UK-wide elections and referendums, local government elections in England and Wales, and voter registration.

It develops policies and processes to make elections more accessible, improve participation, enhance security and improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of elections.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for drafting the Greater London Authority

Election Rules and consults organisations like London Elects and The Electoral Commission on them.

The revised rules for the 2008 London election were laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State in December and will come into force in January.

### Electoral Commission

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Its aim is “integrity and public confidence in the democratic process”.

The Commission is responsible for keeping a list of political parties and which descriptions and emblems they can use on ballot papers. It also has a duty to monitor compliance with the financial rules that the GLA and candidates are subject to, such as campaign expenditure limits, donation controls and associated reporting. It is also responsible for setting the standards for running elections and reports on how well this is done.

Along with London Elects, the Commission is responsible for making sure people understand the importance of registering to vote and know how to vote. It is jointly funding an advertising campaign with London Elects to promote registration and the election, which kicked off in early January.

London Elects and the Commission will also jointly produce guidance for candidates and agents, detailing all aspects of standing for election, and a handbook for polling station staff to assist with the practical running of the polling station on election day.

### London Elects

London Elects is the independent body in charge of organising and promoting the elections for the London Mayor and London Assembly.

The team works directly for the Greater London Returning Officer, Anthony Mayer, under a separate budget and reporting lines from other GLA staff.

London Elects has two distinct functions – operations and communications.

The team is organising the entire election, working closely with the other organisations.

It will also manage candidate nominations for the Mayoral election and the London-wide list section of the London Assembly election.

### The boroughs

The 32 London boroughs and the City of London are responsible for updating the electoral register and running the election locally, for example issuing postal votes and setting up and staffing the polling stations. The biggest borough in each constituency is responsible for the candidate nominations for their Constituency Assembly Member seat.

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