

the **BALLOT** **PAPER**



YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE



London's biggest registration campaign launches

London Elects and The Electoral Commission have launched the first wave of their joint advertising campaign. This first phase is focused on increasing voter registration.

Ads are appearing on the sides of buses, in bus shelters and poster sites, and in local newspapers. This advertising has been supported by adverts and articles in a large number of local newspapers as well as in specialist press including The Voice, Polish Express and EU Chinese Journal.

The fun, light-hearted adverts have a serious aim – to get as many eligible voters in London on the electoral register as possible.

London has the lowest levels of voter registration in the country, with nearly 18% of residents missing from the register in some parts of the capital, compared to an average of just 7% across England and Wales.

The second wave of advertising, beginning at the end of March, will again focus on increasing registration in the last three weeks before the deadline. This phase will include eye-catching TV, radio, outdoor and print advertising. After the registration deadline on 16 April the advertising will focus on providing clear and helpful information on when and how to vote on 1 May.

For more information contact Matt Bright, London Elects' Communications Manager, on matt.bright@london.gov.uk or 020 7983 4449.

MARCH 2008

LONDON'S BIGGEST REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES

THOUSANDS TRAINED READY FOR THE ELECTION

THE GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY ELECTION RULES

GLRO FOREWORD

RUN FOR OFFICE

FOCUS ON: PUBLICITY

YEAR OF THE MARK

WORKING TOGETHER

MAYOR OF LONDON & LONDON ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

I'M REGISTERING TO VOTE A MAYOR IN FOR THE NEXT 4 YEARS

I'M NOT. I'M HAPPY BEING GRUMPY

YOUR CHOICE. MAKE SURE NOTHING STOPS YOU VOTING ON MAY 1

register at londonelects.org.uk

The Electoral Commission

LONDON ELECTS

YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE

Thousands trained ready for the election

In the October issue of the Ballot Paper we outlined the huge amount of training that London Elects organises before the election. With under two months to go until poll day, we detail the activities going on around the capital to prepare borough staff for the election period.

Postal vote training

In the run-up to the election, the London boroughs will process an enormous number of postal votes. This is a daunting task as several new procedures must be carried out between opening an envelope and putting the ballot paper in the ballot box ready for counting. London Elects will offer training to all the London boroughs. These sessions will focus on best practice. Each borough can then incorporate this when developing their own preferred system for dealing with postal votes.

Forensic Science Service signature training

In further preparation for dealing with postal votes, borough delegates will receive training from the Forensic Science Service on how to identify fraudulent signatures. All postal voters must sign a "verification statement" to prove their identity and return this with their completed ballot paper. The local borough checks this signature against the

individual's postal ballot application form. This training is designed to help electoral staff recognise when a signature is fraudulent rather than simply having changed slightly.

Training for polling station staff

Borough electoral staff will also be invited to London Elects training on how to run a polling station. This information will then be 'cascaded' to the many staff hired to run the polling stations on election day. There will be approximately 4,000 polling stations across London on 1 May, meaning over 12,000 staff will need to be trained. This is far too many people for London Elects to train everyone individually. So this top-down system of training will ensure a consistent approach in polling stations across the city.

Electronic counting training

E-counting training will be provided for staff in every constituency. Individuals will be trained in how to operate the e-counting system that will be used to count the votes on 2 May. There are many roles and responsibilities involved on count day and this training will cover them all. The e-counting system is relatively uncomplicated to operate and those attending this training are expected to come away confident in their role on 2 May.

GLRO FOREWORD

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

This edition focuses on the work of the communications team at London Elects. The team is working hard to ensure as many Londoners as possible are on the electoral register in time for 1 May, and that everyone knows how and when to vote.

We take a look at the ads being used in the first wave of the advertising campaign, and look ahead at the advertising strategy as we move closer to the election. Following the launch of 'Mark', an X-shaped Lycra-clad figure, we hear about the plans to send the character all over the city. Elsewhere, Emma Cassidy – London Elects' Public Relations and Media Liaison Officer – explains the important role the press is playing in the awareness campaign.

We also reveal that guidelines have now been released for potential candidates thinking of standing in the elections. Finally, we look ahead to the comprehensive programme of training events for borough and polling station staff being hosted by London Elects over the coming months.

As always we welcome your feedback on this issue, and any suggestions for future editions.



Anthony Mayer
Greater London Returning Officer

The Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2007

The Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2007 came into force on 14 January. Since no MPs objected to them in the "praying against" period, these rules are now definitely the ones which will be used in the election. The rules are available online at www.opsi.gov.uk.

The rules have been substantially revised to give effect to changes introduced by the 2006 Electoral Administration Act. Additionally, electronic counting has been made the default method of counting at ordinary elections for the Mayor and London Assembly and the timetable has been extended from 25 days to 30 days allowing more time to print and deliver the Mayoral booklet.





Run for office!

Anyone who would like to stand in the election for the Mayor of London or the London Assembly London-wide contests can now request a nomination pack from London Elects.

The packs contain the nomination forms and all the information potential candidates need to complete them correctly.

If you would like to receive a nomination pack, contact Adam, London Elects' Co-ordinator, on 020 7983 4444 or candidates@londonelects.org.uk.

FOCUS ON: PUBLICITY

The Ballot Paper talks to Emma Cassidy, Public Relations and Media Liaison Officer at London Elects, about working with the press to publicise the 1 May elections in London.



What is the role of the media in London Elects' awareness campaign?

The media have a really important role in our public awareness campaign, informing their readers, listeners and viewers about how to register and how to vote.

With only a few months to go until the election, media interest has increased dramatically and every day now journalists call us to ask for information about various aspects of the election. Our role is to respond to these calls promptly and accurately. We are also working proactively with the media to promote our campaign and communicate our important messages to Londoners.

What is London Elects doing to make sure the media know about the elections on 1 May?

We want to make sure the media are well informed so that they produce accurate and informative articles and broadcasts.

As early as last summer we started to meet and brief journalists in London about the election and what information we can give them. We have also prepared a media toolkit which contains our factsheets, photos, news articles and statistics, and we always have spokespeople available for interviews.

In addition, all our media contacts receive The Ballot Paper newsletter and our press releases, and the London Elects website has a designated media area.

Which areas of the media are you working with?

We are working with all areas of the media – print, broadcast and online.

There are more than 60 local newspapers in London as well as The Evening Standard and the London free-sheets (Metro, London Lite and thelondonpaper).

London television and the large number of mainstream and community radio stations in the capital will also help us to reach a large number of Londoners.

London has the most diverse population in the UK so it is also important we work with media such as The Polish Express, The Voice and The South African Times. Research shows that many EU citizens and people from some Commonwealth countries may not be registered to vote, so it is important we target specialist media.

Are you working with any other partners?

We have appointed two public relations agencies, Grayling and Media Moguls, to support our campaign. We are also working closely with the communications teams in the borough councils. Many of them are contributing to the campaign by writing stories, linking to our website or giving us space in their publications or on their poster sites.

What will the press office do on election day?

We will support the media on 1 May answering enquiries as they run stories on Londoners going to the polls. When the votes are counted on 2 May, we will keep journalists up-to-date on the count's progress and the results as they are declared. Each of the three count centres will have a dedicated press officer, and a media suite will be set up at City Hall for journalists to write their copy and interview candidates. It will no doubt be a very busy day for me!



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 or call 020 7983 4445/4.



YEAR OF THE MARK

Decked out in Chinese lanterns, Mark, our giant cross, recently celebrated Chinese New Year in London. Between mouthfuls of barbeque pork, photos with Londoners and a dance with the dragons, Mark made his message clear: register to vote in the 1 May elections if you want to make your mark on the future of London.

Mark, an X-shaped character, was launched back in January to mark the 100 days-to-go milestone, and is part of our public awareness campaign, with The Electoral Commission, to encourage the London electorate to register to vote in the 1 May elections.

Over the next few months Mark will be visiting every London borough and several major London events to talk to people about registering to vote and how quick and easy it is to do.

When he visits each borough the local council's returning officer for the election or electoral services manager will be invited to join Mark to have their photograph taken with him for the local press.

Matt Bright, Communications Manager, at London Elects, said: "Shouldering a big X, and with nothing but a lycra bodysuit to keep out the cold, Mark's braving the winter weather to say nothing's stopping us from expressing our choice in the 2008 elections. We want all London residents to look out for Mark in their high streets, at their community events, and across the capital, and pass on the word: register if you want to vote."

It is estimated that up to 1 in 5 eligible Londoners are not on the electoral register. Those most likely not to be registered include people who have moved house recently or those living in private rented accommodation, students, young people, and citizens of EU and Commonwealth countries.

You can register and vote in the London elections if you are at least 18 on 1 May, live in London and are a British, Commonwealth or EU citizen.

If you're not sure if you're on the electoral register contact your borough council. If you want to register contact your council or download a registration form from www.londonelects.org.uk.

The deadline for registering to vote is 16 April.

Working together

At the start of February all London boroughs' communications teams were invited to City Hall for a briefing. The purpose of the event, jointly organised by London Elects and The Electoral Commission, was to discuss how boroughs can help to encourage registration and make voting in the May 1 elections as clear and easy as possible.

Everyone left with a pack of information, which included the London Elects factsheets (now on our website) and a CD of resources. The resources included a website banner, the adverts and template articles and images to run in their council magazines.

Working with borough communications teams is a really valuable way to reach more people and spread awareness of how to register and vote.

Please contact London Elects if you're interested in using any of our resources.

London Elects City Hall, Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA

Email ballotpaper@londonelects.org.uk www.londonelects.org.uk



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