

## Scottish Local Government Elections: Publishing Voting Information

Rule 61 of the Scottish Local Election Rules (as amended) requires that:

(1) In a contested election where the count is conducted by means of an electronic counting system, the returning officer must (except as provided for by paragraph (6)) give public notice of the information specified in paragraph (2) (“the information”), within one week following the declaration of the result of the poll.

(2) The information is, for each polling station (except as provided for by paragraph (3))—

(a) the number of first and subsequent preferences for each candidate;

2(A) For the purposes of this rule, all postal ballot papers cast in a ward must be treated as if cast at a further polling station in that ward.

(3) Where in total less than 200 votes were cast at a polling station the returning officer is to give public notice of the information for that polling station aggregated with (and indistinguishable from) that information from one or more other polling stations in the same ward, being such polling stations as the returning officer sees fit, such that as aggregated the information will include in total no less than 200 votes.

(7) Once public notice of the information has been given, the returning officer must as soon as reasonably practicable procure the destruction of any electronic data or other records retained under rule 57(3) pursuant to this rule, in a manner which ensures that their confidentiality is preserved.

### Methodology for combining batches of less than 200 votes

To ensure that an individual's voter preferences cannot be identified, it has been necessary to aggregate the data where the number of votes cast in a polling station is less than 200.

Because of the variety of wards - urban, rural and mixed - combining data cannot be an exact science, but has been guided by the following criteria recommended by the Electoral Management Board for Scotland:

- where votes are from the same polling place, they will be combined with one or more of the other polling stations.
- combine polling stations that are close geographically, particularly in rural areas.
- combine, where sensible, island communities with other island communities, villages with other villages, rather than combine a village with a large town.
- where geography allows, combine stations of less than 200 votes, rather than combine a station that has less than 200 votes with one that has substantially more than 200 votes. But in situations where a 200 station is geographically distant from a similarly sized station, combine with a larger station.
- combine manually entered votes with postal ballots for the Ward. There are likely to be relatively few of these and seeking to track them back to the original ballot box is likely to risk delaying publication of the data.

## **Accuracy of data**

Prior to publishing, aggregated data has been checked against the declared results. Explanations are provided for any differences.

The data from the E-counting system provide the number of ballot papers that were counted electronically, including any that were entered manually rather than scanned. The official results, however, are those that are returned by Returning Officers on completion of the count. Any discrepancies between the two are not to be taken as any indication that either the e-counting system or the Returning Officer provided an inaccurate figure. For instance, rejected ballot papers are not recorded against each ballot box but the number of ballot papers verified at the count include all ballot papers from that polling station.

## **Use of Data**

In releasing the data, the Returning Officer is making it freely available for public use. It is not subject to copyright and material may be re-used provided that it is acknowledged, not used in a misleading way and is reproduced accurately. The Returning Officer does not accept responsibility for any alteration or manipulation of the data once released.