

ELECTIONS CONFERENCE 2026

FRIDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2026 | 09:30 – 15.45



09.30 **Welcome**

09.35 – 10.15 **Electoral Risk Management for 2026**

As we look ahead to the 2026 election cycle, this session explores emerging risks facing electoral teams, from misinformation and operational resilience to staffing, logistics, and public trust. Join us to discuss practical strategies, proactive planning, and approaches to managing risk and safeguarding the integrity of local elections.

Rupert Beloff, Barrister, 4-5 Gray's Inn Square

Chaired by **Deborah Evans, Chief Executive Officer, LLG**

10.15 – 10.30 **Break**

10.30 – 11.15 **Reflections and Realities: Lessons from Recent Elections**

This session explores key lessons from recent election cycles, examining staff experiences, candidate conduct, and evolving voter ID requirements. We'll discuss practical approaches to improving polling station safety and accessibility, and consider how reflections from past challenges can strengthen election planning, operations, and resilience ahead of the 2026 polls.

Lindsay Tomlinson, Assistant Director Democracy & Governance, Sheffield City Council and Immediate Past Chair, Association of Electoral Administrators

11.15 – 11.30 **Break**

11:30 – 12:15 **The Role of the Returning Officer**

Learn the legal foundations and practical actions necessary to undertake the Returning Officer role. This session focuses on statutory compliance to mitigate legal risks while providing hands-on advice for success. Perfect for existing Returning Officers or deputies needing a refresh or those wishing to undertake the role in the future.

Mark Heath, Partner, VWV

Chaired by **Helen Bennett, Executive Director of Policy & Governance, LLG**

12.15 – 12.30 **Break**

12:30 – 13:15 **How to deal with Election Petitions**

In this session, Emyr Thomas will explain the election petition process,

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discuss recent petitions and describe how Returning Officers dealt with them and advise on what to do if one lands on your desk and how to avoid them.

Emyr Thomas, Partner and Parliamentary Agent, Sharpe Pritchard

13:15 – 13:45 **Lunch**

13:45 – 14:30 **Elections: Postponement and the Aftermath**

Local government reorganisation is being undertaken on a scale rarely seen in England. To help facilitate this the Government states that it will bring forward legislation to postpone elections for some local authorities. This session will explore what this means for local authorities. This session will also look at what the post election political landscape could look like in England and what this might mean for authorities.

Ben Standing, Partner, Browne Jacobson

Chaired by **Paul Turner, LLG President & Director, Legal and Assurance & Monitoring Officer, Essex County Council**

14.30 – 14.45 **Break**

14:45 – 15:45 **Voter ID Pitfalls and Practicalities**

Explore the challenges and practicalities of implementing Voter ID in elections. This session examines potential pitfalls, legal requirements, and operational considerations, offering practical guidance for election officials to ensure a smooth, compliant, and accessible voting process while safeguarding integrity and minimising disruption on polling day.

Vivienne Sedgley, Barrister, 4-5 Gray's Inn Square

Chaired by **Sarah Harriott, Senior Lawyer, West Northamptonshire Council**

15.45 **Conference End**