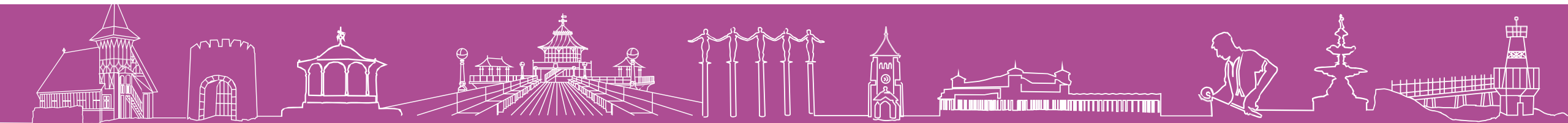


# North Somerset local government elections

## Thursday 4 May 2023

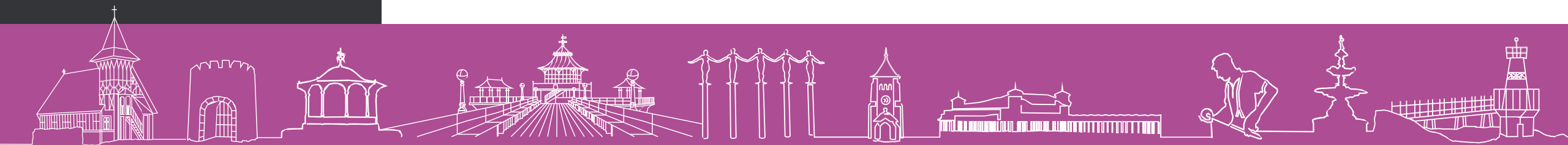
### A briefing for Parish / Town Councils

8 December 2022



## Topics to be covered in this session

- Who's who
- Key dates of the election timetable
- The pre-election period
- The nomination forms
- Informal checks of nomination forms
- Submitting nomination forms
- Contested v uncontested elections
- Transparent recharges
- The Elections Act
- Keeping you informed throughout the process



## Who's who

**The Returning Officer** is the person responsible for running the elections.  
The Returning Officer is **Nicholas Brain**.  
(Deputy Returning Officer – **Philippa Penney**)

**The Electoral Registration Officer** is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists.  
The Electoral Registration Officer is **Nicholas Brain**  
(Deputy Electoral Registration Officer – **Philippa Penney**)

### **Electoral Services Team:**

**Philippa Penney** – Head of Democratic and Electoral Services

**Samantha Usher** – Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

**Ross Henderson** – Democratic and Electoral Services Senior Officer

**Jennifer Wilcock** – Democratic and Electoral Services Support Officer

## The election timetable

Prospective candidates briefing	Monday 20 February
Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 20 March (not later than Monday 27 March)
Nominations commence	10am – Tuesday 21 March
Close of nominations	4pm – Tuesday 4 April
<i>Notification of appointment of election agents</i>	<i>4pm – Tuesday 4 April</i>
Publication of statement of persons nominated / uncontested election results	4pm – Wednesday 5 April
Candidates briefing session	Thursday 13 April
Main issue of postal votes	Saturday 15 April (despatch Monday)
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight – Monday 17 April
Deadline for new postal vote applications / changes to existing postal or postal proxy vote applications	5pm – Tuesday 18 April
Second issue of postal votes	Saturday 22 April

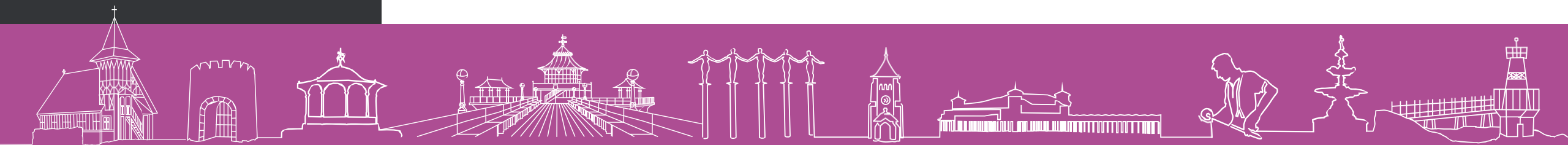
## The election timetable (continued)

Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	Tuesday 25 April
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm – Tuesday 25 April
Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate	5pm – Tuesday 25 April
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Wednesday 26 April
Polling day	7am to 10pm Thursday 4 May
Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service	5pm on polling day
Deadline for replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes	5pm on polling day
Deadline for alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm on polling day
Return of election expenses	+ 28 days from result (parish)

## The pre-election period

- Refers to the publicity restrictions that apply in the run up to an election
- The pre-election period begins once the notice of election has been published on Monday 20 March and ends on Thursday 4 May
- Councils should not publish any material which, in whole or in part appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party (s.2 LGA 1986)
- Duty to have regard at all times to the relevant Code of recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (ss.2 & 4 LGA 1986)

Could a reasonable person conclude that you were spending public money to influence the outcome of the election?



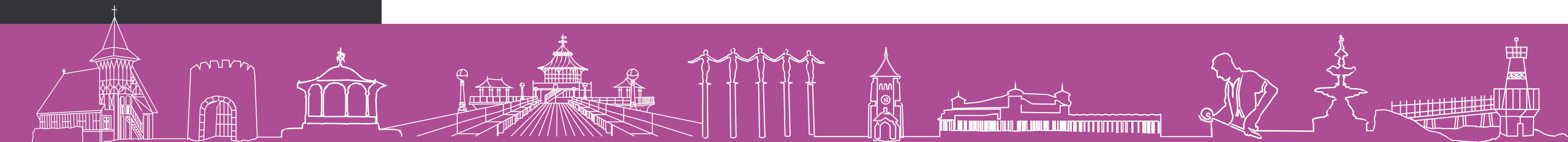
## The pre-election period (continued)

All Council publicity is potentially sensitive in the run-up to the elections. This includes:

- All social media
- Speeches
- Leaflets
- Newspaper articles by or on behalf of the Council
- Sponsorship
- Meetings, and
- Even the colour of floral displays

Factors to be taken into account when considering whether or not publicity is prohibited include:

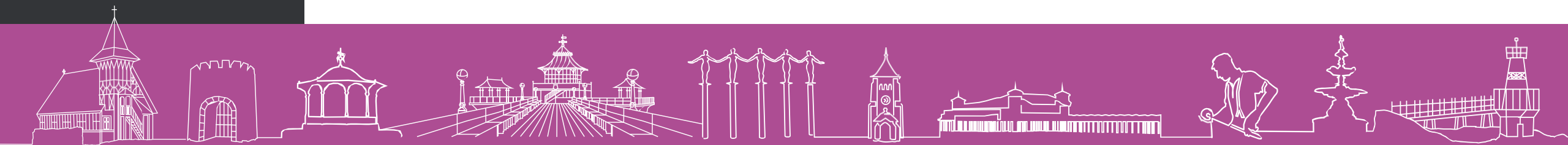
- The content and style of the material
- The time and circumstances of publication
- The likely effect of the material on those to whom it is directed
- Whether the material promotes or opposes an identifiable point of view on a question of political controversy and
- Where the material is part of a campaign, the designed effect of the campaign.



## The pre-election period (continued)

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Continue to discharge normal council business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Produce publicity on politically controversial matters</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Publish factual information to counteract misleading, controversial or extreme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Refer to individuals or groups in press releases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use relevant lead officers, rather than members for reactive media releases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Arrange proactive media or events involving candidates</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use a politician to respond in particular circumstances, such as in an emergency situation or where there is a genuine need for a member level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>X Issue photographs which include candidates</li> <li>X Supply council photographs or other materials to councillors or political groups</li> <li>X Continue hosting third-party blogs or e-communications</li> <li>X Help with national political visits</li> <li>X Continue to run “sensitive” local campaigns</li> <li>X Launch any new consultations</li> </ul>

**This is a matter for you to decide but ultimately any decision you take must be seen as fair and reasonable.**





## The nomination forms

Bespoke nomination forms for each Parish (or Parish ward if warded) will be made available on our website.

To avoid any issues please submit packs **in their entirety**, whether you think the pages are relevant or not. This includes;

- the nomination form (1a)
- their home address form (1b) (part 1 AND part 2)
- the candidate's consent to nomination (1c) (including pages 2, 3 and 4 of the legislation)

Party candidates will also need to submit;

A certificate authorising the use of a party name / registered description on the ballot paper (form 2)

A written request to use one of the party's emblems on the ballot paper [optional] (form 3)

## Nomination form 1a

Include the **electoral ward** (which will be pre-populated if our packs are used) and the **candidates name** in full

Optional: use **commonly used name** box(es) if commonly known by a name other than actual name and wish to use it instead.

**Description** field – 4 options:

- 1) leave blank
- 2) Independent
- 3) a description not exceeding six words
- 4) party candidates can use party name or description authorised by a certificate issued by or on behalf of the Nominating Officer

### **Subscribers**

2 subscribers who must sign and print their names AFTER the name, address and description field have been completed.

Must be registered electors in the relevant electoral area. Elector number request forms and register request forms will be available on our website and can be emailed to [candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk)

## Home address form 1b

### **Part 1 of the home address form must state:**

- the candidates full name and home address in full
- the candidates qualifying address (to be completed even if this is the same as their home address above), or, where they have declared on their consent to nomination that they meet more than one qualification, their qualifying addresses
- which of the qualifications their qualifying address or addresses relate to (a, b, c and/or d)
- the full name and the home address in full of the witness to their consent to nomination

### **Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if the candidate does not want their address to be made public:**

- The name of the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK) – for most candidates this will be North Somerset
- if the candidate lives outside the UK, the name of the country in which their home address is situated.

**Part 2 of the home address form must be submitted, regardless of whether it has been completed or not.**

## Consent to nomination 1c

Must include:

- the candidates name
- the electoral area which they standing in
- confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, but select all that apply)
- the candidates date of birth & signature
- date of consent
- the witness' name and signature (same as home address form attestor)
- pages 1 to 4 should all be returned with the form 1c

## Certificate of authorisation form 2 (party candidates only)

Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the Nominating Officer (or a person authorised to act on their behalf)

The certificate may:

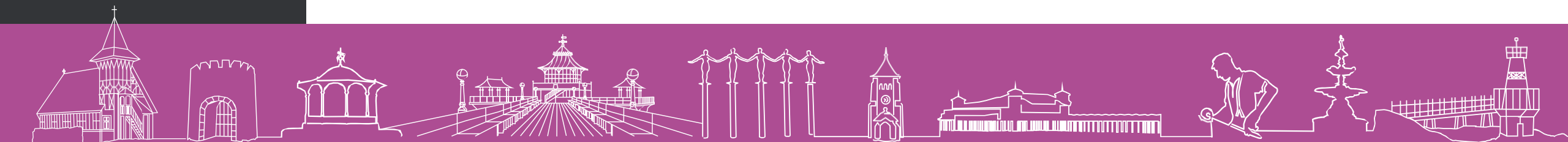
- allow the use of the party name or a particular description
- allow candidate to choose whether to use the party name or any of the descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission

## Emblem request form 3 (party candidates only)

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Candidates who use a party description can have an emblem. Candidates must ask for it themselves, and should look at EC website and use the description of the one they want.

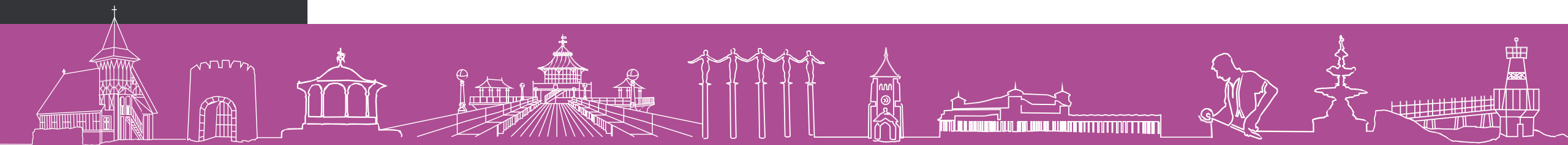
## Informal checks of nomination forms

- We will be offering an informal checking service, by appointment only
- This service provides an opportunity for any errors / omissions to be identified prior to formal submission
- Can be done in person, on Microsoft teams or over the telephone
- Staff will only be checking to see that the nomination paper is in good form, and will not be able to offer any legal advice
- Appointments can be made by emailing [candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk)



## Submitting nomination forms

- We strongly advise that nomination papers are completed and submitted as early as possible during the nomination period, but the no later than **4pm on Tuesday 4 April 2023**
- **Completed nominations must be delivered by hand** to the Returning Officer at North Somerset Council, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ between 10am and 4pm on any weekday between Tuesday 21 March 2023 and Tuesday 4 April 2023. There will be a desk in the gateway dedicated to receiving them.
- This is the only place where nomination papers can be formally submitted
- Whilst the certificate of authorisation and emblem request form can be submitted by post, we will not be holding part papers on file.
- No prior appointment for submission is required, and there are no restrictions on who can deliver the nomination forms, nor on how many can be delivered at one time.
- A receipt will be issued, which we advise should be safely retained
- Submissions will be processed strictly in receipt order and, if multiple, in bundle order
- We are prohibited from discussing any other nominations that have been handed in, so please don't ask!





## Contested v Uncontested Elections

- A poll will only be held for your area should there be more valid nominations than there are number of vacancies (contested)
- Should we receive fewer nominations than there are vacancies then those candidates will be elected uncontested – the Parish Council may then proceed to fill the remaining vacancies by co-option, provided there is a quorum.
- If there are not enough valid nominations to make a quorum then any validly nominated candidates are declared elected uncontested and the Returning Officer shall order a new election to fill any remaining vacancies within 35 working days beginning with the original day of the election.
- It is suggested that there is to be a minimum of two re-runs of the election before North Somerset Council appoints persons to fill all or any of the vacancies until other councillors are elected and take up office. (s91 LGA 1972)

## Transparent recharges

You will have already been provided with an estimated cost should the elections for your area be contested

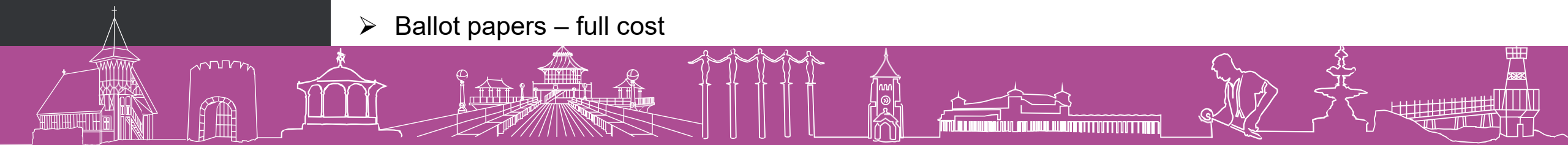
Below are elements of the election that will be recharged back to the Parish council – please note that these will be charged net and so you will be unable to reclaim the VAT.

### Costs relating to postal votes

- Postal voting packs – combined packs, half of the cost
- Postal ballot papers – full cost
- Postage (outward and inward) – half of cost
- Postal vote issue / opening staff – cost calculated based on the number of postal votes issued / opened for your area

### Costs relating to polling day

- Polling station staff – half of cost
- Polling station premises – half of cost (if applicable)
- Ballot papers – full cost



## Transparent recharges (continued)

### Costs relating to the verification and count

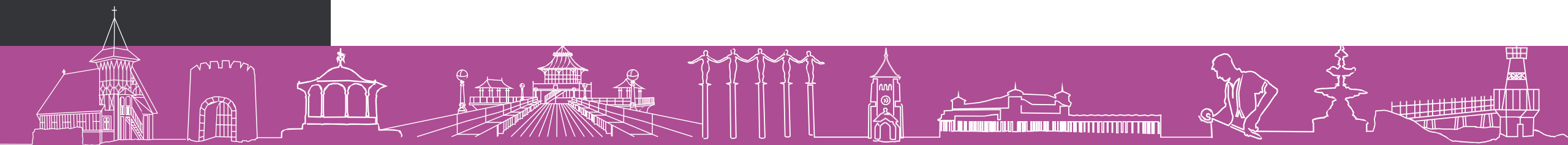
- Count staff – calculated based on the number of ballot papers to be verified and counted for your area
- Venue – Fee to be divided equally between each election held
- Count materials – for example the kangaroo boards and counting sheets

### Other costs

- Returning officer fee – as per NSC scale of fees
- 20% central expenses fee to cover all other elements relating to nominations, candidates, elector queries and raising public awareness – we do not charge parishes for poll cards.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and there may be other unforeseen elements that may arise during the election that will be recharged.

A full breakdown of the costs will be provided as soon as practicable after the election, along with all invoices to aid transparency.



# The Elections Act 2022

## **Voter ID**

- Electors to show valid ID in polling stations
- Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to issue free voter identification to anyone who applies

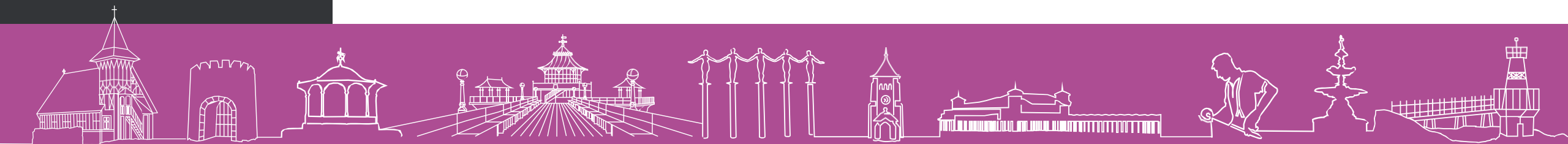
## **Accessible voting**

- Returning officer to take reasonable steps to support electors with disabilities

There are also other areas of electoral reform being brought in by the Elections Act that will not be covered by this briefing as they do not apply to the 2023 elections, however if you would like to know more you can visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greater-protections-for-voters-as-governments-elections-bill-achieves-royal-assent>

## ***Postal vote handling***

- *Limit on the number of postal votes handed in at polling stations*
- *Ban on political parties and campaigners from handling postal votes*



## Voter ID in polling stations

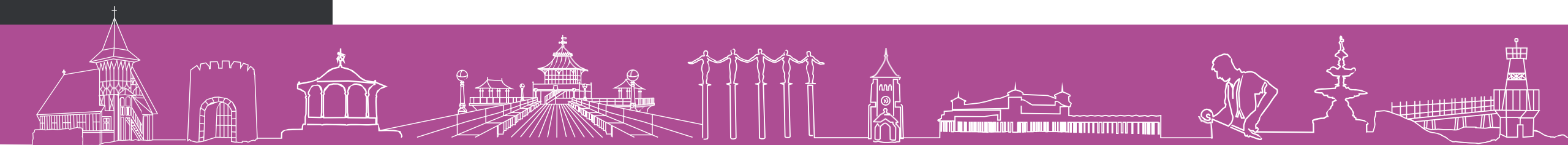
Electors will have to show an approved form of photo identification before voting.

A wide range of photographic identification will be accepted, including:

- Various concessionary travel passes
- PASS cards
- Ministry of Defence identity cards
- Photocard parking permits issued as part of the Blue Badge scheme
- Driver's licenses
- Passports

Expired photographic identification will also be accepted (provided the photograph is of a good enough likeness)

If the elector cannot provide one of the required forms of identification, they will be able to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate from their Electoral Registration Officer. The online application process will be open from January 2023 and the deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate is 5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023.



## Keeping you informed throughout the process

We will be using the North Somerset Council website to communicate with all stakeholders throughout the election. Visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk) for:

- Template resources (including nomination forms, register request forms and other associated documents)
- Legal notices
- Further information regarding the Elections Act as the secondary legislation is made
- Partnership packs for parish councils
- Regular updates and bulletins
- Information for candidates (and agents)
- Information for voters

## Contact details

Elections office : 01934 634909

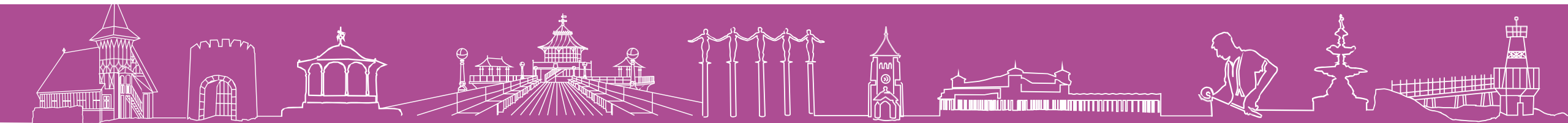
[electoral.services@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:electoral.services@n-somerset.gov.uk)

Candidates or nominations queries: [candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:candidates@n-somerset.gov.uk)

Highways department contact – Adam Wood [adam.wood@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:adam.wood@n-somerset.gov.uk)

Electoral Commission contacts: 0333 103 1928

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england)



# Any questions?

