

## ELECTION ADDRESSES AND OTHER ELECTORAL MATERIAL

Any candidate in the proctorial or House of Laity elections is entitled to request the presiding officer to circulate an election address from that candidate by making it available to view on the online elections portal, posting it on the diocese's website and sending it by post to every elector in the diocese or area who has not provided an email address. An election address must be on no more than one sheet of A4 paper and may be printed on both sides. If it is in electronic form, it must be capable of being so printed in an easily legible form. It is for each candidate to decide whether to take advantage of this opportunity – it is optional. But whether or not candidates do so, there is nothing to stop them sending material direct to electors themselves. It may therefore be worth telling electors who have provided an email address that the email address will be made available to any candidate who requests it<sup>52</sup>.

Neither the Clergy ER nor the Laity ER lay down any rules as to the content of election addresses. So, subject to the limitation on the size of an election address, the candidate is free to decide on its layout and content (including whether to include a photograph). A presiding officer does not have power to require changes to a candidate's election address unless, in exceptional circumstances, the presiding officer advises the candidate that the election address is defamatory or otherwise unlawful in some way.

If a candidate wishes to exercise the right to have an election address circulated by the presiding officer, the candidate must provide one copy of the address at his or her own expense. This can be delivered to the presiding officer by email, by post or in person. It must be received by the presiding officer by a date specified by him or her, no earlier than seven days after the closing date for nominations. (The presiding officer should specify this date in the citation or invitation to nominate.) The presiding officer is under no obligation to circulate election addresses received after the due date or not in the required form<sup>53</sup>.

It is also desirable for the presiding officer, when providing information about the right to have an election address circulated, to indicate the way in which election addresses will be reproduced (e.g. in colour or in black and white), and to explain that they will be made available on the online elections portal and on the diocesan website, so that candidates are aware of that when deciding on the format of their address. It would be open to a candidate to provide the election address in two forms: for example, one in colour for posting on the online elections portal and one in black and white, and therefore more suitable for high quality reproduction, for sending by post to electors who have not provided an email address.

All the duly received election addresses should be made available to view on the online elections portal and posted on the diocese's website. Election addresses to be sent by post must be reproduced at the cost of the diocese, on paper of identical quality, size and colour, in sufficient numbers to enable printed copies to be sent to all qualified electors who have not provided an email address. This could be done by preparing a booklet in which candidates' election addresses appear in the same order as that in which their names appear on the online elections portal or voting paper (see paragraph 61). As some candidates might not provide an election address, as they are entitled to do, it is recommended that the online elections portal and diocesan website state prominently that "The election address of every candidate who has provided one is displayed here" and that any booklet contain a statement at the start that "This booklet contains the election address of every candidate who has provided one."

Before invitations to vote are issued, the presiding officer should make each election address available to view on the online elections portal and on the diocesan website. In the

case of those electors to whom election addresses are to be sent in paper form, they should be sent by post with the voting papers.

The presiding officer is under a duty to supply free of charge a copy of the relevant register of electors (including, if an elector has provided an e-mail address, that address) to any duly nominated candidate who makes such a request. It must be supplied within seven days of the request being received. Clearly the practicalities of how this obligation will be fulfilled will have to be considered well in advance in order to ensure that all candidates are treated equally. (For example, it is acceptable to provide address labels but, if that is to be done, all candidates must be given the option of receiving electors' addresses in that format.)

The presiding officer is required to ensure that, between the issue of invitations to nominate and the end of the voting period, no literature (other than the election addresses referred to in paragraph 48) which, in the opinion of the presiding officer, is likely to prejudice the election, is circulated to electors by the presiding officer or by or under authority of the diocesan synod or any deanery synod, or are distributed at any synod meeting. The rural dean, the lay chair and the secretary of the deanery synod are under a similar duty to ensure that during the election period no literature is circulated or distributed at a synod meeting which, in the opinion of any of them, is likely to prejudice the election.

Generally, presiding officers and dioceses should be alert to the need to seek to avoid material appearing on diocesan websites or in diocesan publications during the election period which might be thought to favour, or prejudice, any candidate or class of candidates.

However, neither the presiding officer nor any other office holder or body in the diocese is responsible for supervising any material that candidates may themselves send to electors, or websites maintained by them or on their behalf.