

17th March, 2023



Letter by Email

Mr B Rylands
Flat D Avenay Court
217 Sandgate Road
Folkestone
CT20 2LN

Dear Mr Rylands

Thank you for your email to Mr Watts on 03 March 2023 regarding the recent Hythe West County By-election.

I adopt the role of Deputy Returning Officer, as appointed by the County, to carry out the election on their behalf.

As Deputy Returning Officer, powers are instilled to complete the election to my satisfaction; that the poll, verification and count have been carried out efficiently and successfully against legislation and Electoral Commission guidance.

I, as Deputy Returning Officer have a general duty to conduct the count properly. I should be satisfied that the results or totals (as appropriate) reflect the ballots received. If the figures do not reconcile, steps should be taken in order to identify and rectify the discrepancies, if any should occur.

In some instances, figures may not be reconciled at verification stage or at the counting stage. If this happens steps are taken to ensure ballot papers haven't been left in the ballot box, floors and surfaces are checked, rejected ballot papers are accounted for and all bundles and part bundles have been included in the final sum.

If the figures do not match after this initial check, a recount takes place. A recount took place at the Hythe West By-election because of a discrepancy of 2. After the recount I, Deputy Returning Officer and team were satisfied that the numbers could not be reconciled. A provisional result was shown to candidates and agents, as is custom, before the official declaration. At the provisional result, candidates and agents are shown the result and are allowed to request a recount.

If a recount is requested and allowed by the me, it will take place before the official declaration. If the result is still the same a declaration is made. If no recount is requested, the declaration is officially declared directly after the provisional result to candidates and agents.

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The public notice of an official declaration consists of:

- The name of each candidate elected
- The total number of votes given to each candidate
- The number of rejected ballot papers/votes

Our declarations contain more information than that of an official declaration as a way of providing additional information that has been asked for in the past. They are not verbally “declared” by me as the Deputy Returning Officer as this is not part of the official contents of a declaration (as listed in the bullet points above).

With regards to the percentage turnout, this is within the additional information we publish, but holds no part of the official declaration and is not announced by me as the Deputy Returning Officer. The Electoral Management System we use produces the turnout figure, the team has looked in to the discrepancy and are liaising with the new Electoral Management System supplier to ensure there are no discrepancies in the calculations going forward, however minimal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Priest', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Susan Priest
Chief Executive