Elections Policy & Process – 2024/2025

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Policy and Procedure

This document supplements the election provisions in the Charter, Byelaws, and Regulations and describes the overarching principles that will apply to all LI elections once it has been approved.

Aim

The overarching aim of this policy is to ensure a fair and equitable election process and that all potential candidates have access to the same information and understanding to enable them to consider putting themselves forward.

Each election will have a separate procedural document setting out the timeline, terms of office, arrangements, and any specific rules pertaining to that election including campaign guidance. Those specific procedures are agreed by the Board of Trustees in advance of each round of elections and any subsequent casual vacancies will adopt the same procedure save for the timelines.

Definitions

The following are key definitions and terms used throughout the election documentation and process:

Term	Definition
Day	A calendar day and includes Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and Public Holidays.
Independent Scrutineer	The person or company appointed by the LI to carry out independent scrutiny of Council elections. The Election Officer will act as Independent Scrutineer where required in branch elections.
Nominator	The member nominating a candidate.
Notified address	The postal address of a member on the membership database, or such other address the member has provided to the LI
LI member	A person whose name and address are on the LI membership database and who has paid the relevant year's membership fee.
Election Officer	The person responsible for managing the conduct of elections. For all elections this must not be a member of the LI and can be a member of staff as is the case for Branch elections.
Election	The whole election period including the opening and closing of nominations; candidate vetting and the opening and closing of a ballot.

Signature	Either a hand-written signature or an electronic signature.
Unique Identification Number	The number issued to a voter which is exclusive to them and enables the member to vote in an election.
Voter	A member of the LI who is eligible to vote in a specific election.
Voting record	The record of a member's vote in an election conducted other than by postal vote or poll. A voting record may be in printed or electronic form.

Core principles for elections

The core principles that apply to all LI elections are that:

- The election process is democratic, with each vote carrying equal weight.
- All members are informed of the opportunity to engage and proactively encouraged to participate.
- Participation in the elections is accessible to all eligible members (both as candidates and voters) and necessary steps taken to ensure that equity of opportunity.
- The candidate and nomination criteria are not arbitrary, excessively restrictive or discriminatory.
- The voting system will be secure and accurate.
- The administration process for elections will be transparent.
- The results of elections will be announced promptly and be made available to all members.

Equal Opportunities

All members must be able to participate equally in elections and care must be taken to ensure that:

- All election materials are inclusive and available in accessible formats on request.
- Eligibility criteria are not discriminatory.
- If requested by a member, alternative methods of voting will be considered where possible.

Election Timetables

Elections will be organised on strict timetable to ensure sufficient timing for elections to progress. The following is a suggested timetable but may be tailored for each individual election requirements:

Process		**Timeline**
1.	Appoint Independent Scrutineer	Prior to the election where required.
2.	Agree the voting method	Prior to the election. To be agreed by the appropriate governing body i.e. digital poll or postal vote in exceptional circumstances.

3.	Call for election	The date of the election will normally be determined by the appropriate Regulations, but in some instances a formal decision to call an election may be required.
4.	Publish the notice of election	Notice to be sent by email to all eligible members declaring the election open and inviting nominations. Notice of the election and the opening date for nominations will be included in the next available LI publication and published on the website.
5.	Closing date for nominations	Where nominations required, the closing date to be at least 1 calendar month, but no later than 2 calendar months, after the date of publishing the notice of election.
6.	Publish the list of candidates	A list of candidates standing to be published on the website within a minimum of 15 days after the closing date for nominations.
7.	Closing date for withdrawals	No later than 4 days after the date of publication of the candidate details.
8.	Voting open	The individual date set for each election.
9.	Issue of voting papers	Notice to be sent by email to all eligible members declaring the election voting open and inviting members to vote.
10.	Voting closes	To be set at least 21 days after the day voting opens.
11.	Votes counted	Count to be concluded within a week of voting closes.
12.	Candidates notified of outcome	Contested elections - no later than 2 days after the conclusion of the count. Uncontested - no later than 7 days after the date of the publication of candidate details.
13.	Results published	Election - results to be published on the website no later than 3 days after the candidates have been notified of the result. Uncontested - no later than 3 days after the candidate has been notified.
14.	Archive documents	Any documents submitted by candidates to be kept on file for 12 months and then destroyed.

Notice of Elections

Adequate notice must be given of all elections according to any requirements as set out in the By-Laws and Regulations and any associated constitution such as those for Branches.

All members eligible to put forward nominations and vote in the election must be sent the relevant notice directly.

Election notices to be included in any relevant LI publications / newsletters and published on the website.

The notice to include:

- The number of the vacancies to be filled and details of candidates.
- Candidate eligibility criteria.
- The closing date for nominations.
- The date voting will open.
- The closing date for voting.

Candidate Eligibility

An eligible candidate must:

- Have been a full fee-paying member (CMLI, FLI) or Associate member of the LI for at least a year. Apart from candidates for a student vacancy where no minimum length of association is required.
- Meet any skills or further criteria stipulated for any vacancy.
- Not hold a permanent salaried employment role[1] or a fixed term/zero hours paid contract with the Landscape Institute.
- Not have reached the maximum term in the position up for election, unless there has been a gap of at least one year since previously holding such a position.
- If elected to an Officer role, step down from all existing positions on an LI committee, and for other elected roles step down from an existing position on another LI committee where there may be a conflict.
- Not hold office in any organisation which competes with the organisation for members or which, in the opinion of Board has policies or positions that are in conflict with the main objects in the Charter and its overall philosophies.
- Declare their willingness, if elected, to fulfil the role and commitments as set out in the appropriate role description and to adhere to all LI policies and procedures.
- Not be subject to any ongoing disciplinary proceedings at work (or University in the case of students) or to any ongoing disciplinary proceedings in respect of any role they hold at the LI.
- Not be subject to an open or upheld complaint against them that is being / has been investigated by the LI under the complaints procedure.
- Declare that they:
    - Meet the criteria for Fit and Proper Persons (trustee positions only)
    - Have the support of their employer (if employed) to carry out the role, as well as the time and availability needed to commit to the role

[1] *a person is a salaried member of staff if they receive payment of any kind, and not necessarily financial, in return for service to the Institute. This includes secondees whose employers may receive payment from the Institute to compensate them for loss of the secondee's services, and any person paid on a self-employed basis, either full or part time.*

- Uphold the Nolan Principles of Public Life.
- Know of no reason why they cannot stand for election
- Are not prohibited by law from being a Trustee of a Charity.
- Will stand down from their role if elected should they fail to meet any of above criteria, or any additional criteria specific to a particular role, during their term of office.

In addition, it is requested that in advance of submitting their nomination, any candidate wishing to stand discusses and agrees with the LI any special requirements they may need to enable them to fulfil the commitments of their office.

Any criteria specific to an election, such as those relating to Branch elections, will be in addition to the above.

Nominations

Where candidate nominations are to be sought, as set out in the Regulations or Branch Constitution, the candidate and nominator requirements will be set out in the invitation.

Nominators

Nominations are to be submitted by the candidate via the mechanism stipulated in the invitation and must give the relevant details of any supporting nominators.

All nominators will be contacted following the submission of the nomination to confirm that:

- The candidate is known to them.
- In their view the candidate meets the criteria, and they support the nomination.
- They are not aware of any reason why the candidate should not stand for election.

Nominators can nominate more than one candidate for an election but only one per position.

Nominations must include the following information:

- Candidate's name and email address
- Membership number and grade
- Candidate's confirmation that they are willing, able, and eligible to stand for election.
- Names, membership numbers and email address of nominators

Invalid Nominations

A nomination will be invalid if:

- It is not received by the closing date for nominations.
- The name of a nominator is missing.
- Candidate eligibility requirements are not met.
- In the Independent Scrutineer and / or Election Officer's view there are material inaccuracies or untruthfulness in the particulars of the candidate or the nominator(s).

If a nomination is invalid the candidate will be informed in writing by the Election Officer and the candidate's nomination will be immediately withdrawn from the election.

Verifying Nominations

The Independent Scrutineer / Election Officer will verify all nominations by checking the candidate meets all the eligibility criteria and confirming the nominators support the nomination. Candidates may be required to provide evidence during the verification process.

Withdrawal & death of candidates

A candidate can withdraw their nomination at any time before the closing date for nominations by submitting a notice of withdrawal, but not after that date.

A candidate can withdraw from an election by submitting a notice of withdrawal. This must be delivered to the Election Officer no later than 4 days after the publication of the candidates' details.

If a candidate withdraws the election proceeds with the remaining candidates.

If a candidate dies at any time between the closing date for nominations, and the announcement of the election result, the election will be abandoned before the results have been announced. The election will be restarted, and those candidates already deemed eligible will not be required to submit fresh nominations.

Uncontested Elections

If an election is uncontested (i.e. the number of candidates is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies) the candidates' statements will be posted on the website and the candidate(s) declared elected unopposed.

Voting

The primary voting system used in elections is first-past-the-post unless otherwise specified in the election procedure

Electronic voting will be the default mechanism for all elections.

When an election is conducted by electronic vote an email containing a link to a voting website, or alternatively a downloadable ballot paper, will be sent to all those eligible to vote.

Once submitted a vote cannot be changed or withdrawn

Eligibility to Vote

To be eligible to vote a voter must:

- Be a Corporate Member.
- Be a Student Member in relation to voting for Student vacancy
- Meet any eligibility criteria for the specific election including having their Li registered address, in the relevant area for the election, if it is a geographical constituency.

Counting of Votes

The Independent Scrutineer / Election Officer is responsible for reviewing and recording votes (electronic, telephone or post) as soon as possible after the close of voting. No other person will have access to voting records (electronic or ballot papers).

Voting records should be verified before being counted.

Verification will involve checking:

- The unique identification number (if used).
- The declaration of identity form (if used).
- The appropriate verification procedures
- The total number of votes received. This must be recorded and compared with the numbers issued and numbers eligible to vote.

The Independent Scrutineer / Election Officer shall record the verification process and make a statement as to the results, and all candidates shall be entitled to a copy of that statement.

Validity of Votes

The decision of the Independent Scrutineer / Election Officer on the validity of a vote, or any question arising in respect to a vote, will be final.

A vote will be invalid if:

- It is not received by the Independent Scrutineer / Election Officer before the deadline for the close of voting.
- It is not in the required format.
- The person who voted was not entitled to vote, or there is uncertainty as to whether the person was entitled to vote (for example if a declaration of identity form is required but did not accompany the ballot paper).
- There is no clear indication of voting intention e.g. the voter has voted for more than one candidate.

Tied Votes

If there is a tie between candidates the President, or the Vice President in their absence, shall have the casting vote.

Results

The Election Officer is responsible for announcing the results of an election. If an election is uncontested (i.e. the number of candidates is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies) a statement of the candidates will be posted on the website as soon as practicable after the close of nominations, and the candidates shall be declared elected unopposed.

If the election is contested, the candidate(s) with the highest number of votes following the count will be declared elected. All candidates will be notified of the results as soon as possible after the count has concluded.

Members will be notified of the results on the website and/or in the first appropriate publication following the election.

Retention of Votes

All voting records must be retained for a period of at least 12 months, after which they may be destroyed.

Elections during times of change

Where there is a transition during a period of organisational changes (for example, if dates or timings of elections have been altered or if geographical boundaries are changing) then the appropriate governing body can extend or reduce terms of office accordingly. However, where a constituency is merged with another, a member who has served on a committee shall have their previous terms of office included should they put themselves forward as a candidate in the new constituency.

Complaints about candidates during elections

The Election Officer will investigate any material (those that are more than minor or vexatious) complaints raised against candidates during elections in line with current Election Complaints Process [link].

Postal vote

If an election is conducted by postal vote a ballot paper will be sent to each member eligible to vote.

The ballot paper will include:

- The name of the Independent Scrutineer and / or Election Officer
- A unique consecutive serial number
- The candidate statement for all candidates.
- Details of the voting procedure, including the date for the close of voting, and the address to which votes should be sent.
- A ballot form, or instructions on how to vote if an alternative voting method is being used.

Replacement Papers

In the exceptional event a voter has lost or spoilt their ballot paper in such a way that it can no longer be used as a ballot paper, they can apply to the Election Officer for a replacement paper. The Election Officer will only supply a replacement paper if it can be shown, to the satisfaction of the Election Officer, that the paper was lost or spoilt unintentionally, and that there is no possibility of a duplication of voting.

The decision of the Election Officer on whether to issue a replacement ballot paper is final.

A vote will be invalid if:

- The vote is marked in the wrong place but with a clear indication of which candidate or candidates are preferred.
- The vote is marked otherwise than with a cross or number.
- There is more than one mark and with no clear indication of which candidate, or the member has not used all their votes.

Only the Independent Scrutineer/Election Officer can determine whether a ballot paper, or voting record, is invalid. All invalid papers or voting records should be marked “invalid” and must be kept with all other ballot papers / voting records. In announcing the results, the Election Officer shall also announce the number of invalid votes.

Appendix A: Campaigning Guidance

For the purposes of an election campaigning, candidates and their supporters will not have access to Institute resources.

To help candidates campaign guidance is set out below:

Please note this guidance may be amended from time to time for different elections.

Your campaign

What's your unique selling point?

You need to be clear about what you can offer to the Institute if you get elected. How can you differentiate yourself from other candidates? How does your lived experience make you special? What skills, knowledge and experiences make you a good candidate for the role?

Online channels

Social media platforms offer instant access to a broad range of people and can help you to extend your reach beyond your immediate pool of contacts.

Using sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and TikTok can really help to get yourself noticed. If you do not already have these types of social media accounts, you may wish to consider setting one up to campaign. You will need to be active on social media to grow your following and to reach new audiences. You will also need to consider the different types of content people expect to see on those channels (videos, images, infographics etc. in addition to text).

You can also send emails to encourage people to vote for you. Keep your message clear and concise – and signpost people to further information on your website, blog or social media accounts. Use email addresses you have gathered via your networks and ask those contacts to forward your email on to their friends and colleagues who are members. Bear in mind the rules and guidance, later in this document, on data protection and using Institute resources. You might like to consider using a free videoconferencing platform like Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, or Facebook Messenger Rooms to set up a virtual networking session to meet members and explain what you can offer as a candidate.

You may want to make a short video of yourself as part of your campaign.

To support your campaign the Institute can:

Assist with your candidate profile

As part of our commitment to equity and diversity we can review your statement and biographical information for obvious errors (spelling mistakes etc.).

Your statement will then be shared as part of the voting information and put on the LI website.

Publish your candidate profile on the Institute website

For Council elections, the information in your election statement, along with your biographical information will be published on the LI website. Potential voters will be able to view this to help them make their decision.

You may choose to use a photograph as part of your campaign but please note that the LI does not publish candidates' photographs.

Enable other members to get in touch with you

We can include an email address and/or phone number on the election webpage for members to get in touch with you directly. Please email xxxxxxx to let us know if you would like us to do this and to share your contact details with us.

What you can't do

Other than what is available for all candidates, as outlined above, you cannot use Institute resources to promote your campaign.

Here is a guide on what are Institute resources. Please note this list is not exhaustive so if you are unsure please seek advice immediately.

- The membership and staff database
- External and internal circulation lists.
- The Institute website.
- Institute publications – electronic or printed.
- Institute branding.
- Funding from branches, other official Institute groups.
- Institute staff – you must not ask Institute staff to help you with your campaign for example, asking them to forward on emails or help write your statement.
- If you already hold an elected or official role in the Institute, you cannot use this platform to promote your candidacy or ask for support
- Because of data protection laws we cannot supply you with contact details for other members. Please do not ask staff to forward emails for you as we are unable to do that. In addition, you must not use contact lists that you have acquired as part of another role you have held in the Institute – e.g if you are a branch chair and have access to a list of members in your area you must not use this for your campaign. This would contravene our policy on data protection which is in line with data protection laws and principles. You should also be aware of your employer's own data protection and IT use policies when considering whether you are able to email your colleagues.
- If you have been invited to speak publicly, or to feature in or publish articles in any Institute media, by the Institute you should not do this once your nomination is confirmed and until the close of voting.
- If you are unsure about anything, please contact the LI team: regulations@landscapeinstitute.org