

Elections on a Shoestring

Second Edition

THE INDEPENDENT NETWORK



Jim Thornton

Introduction

Why are you running for election? What is your vision? Have you asked your friends and family what they think? Do you want power and popularity, or do you want to make the world a better place? People often struggle to understand how others perceive their personality: ask honest trusted people how they see you. Know Thyself.

Elections are very simple in one sense: **you have to identify the people who will vote for you, and then nag them to go to the Polling Station or send in their Postal Vote.**

But this hides a great deal of hard work, and this booklet will hopefully help you to make sure you put your efforts in the right places.

Independents generally do not have an Election Machine to get them elected. Unlike the major party candidates they are often completely on their own, but they have a passion to speak up for the people in their Ward or their constituency. Although we are writing this for local Ward elections, many of the ideas apply to a Students' Union or Trade Union election, for example.

So first of all Five Key Principles:

1. **Fish where the fish are:** don't waste time chasing people who will never vote for you. Find the people who are likely to think well of you and badger them to vote for you. To identify where these people are, you need *data*.
2. **Build your Database:** running an election without data is like riding a bike down a country lane at night without lights. Who generally votes, and who never votes? Who has a postal vote? What sort of people are likely to vote

for you, and where do they live? Postal Voters are twice as likely to vote as everyone else in a local election.

3. **Do the Maths:** how many houses in your Ward? How many hours to deliver your leaflets? How many hours to door knock, to stand in the market, or at the train station, or phoning, or communicating on social media? Time is a limited resource. Work out what you will need at key points, and then work backwards. **Logistics are important:** beware of spending too much time being busy, and not enough time being organised.
4. **People are not stupid:** beware of activism without a proper purpose, or a promise you cannot deliver. Will the voters think you simply want to win the election, but then you will join the establishment, go native, and not be heard of again until the next election, when you will try some other stunt?
5. **Think long-term:** each election is a building block: so remember to say thank you to all those who helped you, and try and find ways to thank those who voted for you. Keep meeting people, keep working in the community, and keep communicating throughout each year.

You can find out about the mechanics and details of fighting a local election on various websites, but you may find the odd idea in this booklet that helps you get a bit of a cutting edge and extra exposure. Whatever else, have a really great time and enjoy getting to know the neighbours! Make elections fun!

The first thing is — **make sure you have a really comfortable pair of shoes.** You have a lot of walking to do.

Plan early

As Keith Ross, former Chair of the LGA Independent Group says – the way to win elections is to ‘live your Ward and truly represent your electorate.’

If the voters have never heard of you, they are hardly likely to vote for you.

START EARLY: it may be three or four years before you get really well known in the Ward, One Party says that if you do not get a leaflet round before Christmas, you will not make sufficient impact by May. But you are where you are, so don't wait any longer, and don't wait until after Nominations close.

THINK LONG-TERM: maybe I won't make it this time, but this one gets me more well-known, and puts down a marker for next time.

BUILD A TEAM: a team means more people getting more work done, and they provide resilience in a campaign and encouragement for the candidate. Can you put a team together to help you? Leading an effective team of volunteers is a tough task, so think it through carefully.

LIST OUT YOUR NETWORKS: in the clubs and societies you belong to, the people you socialise with, who is a voter in your Ward?

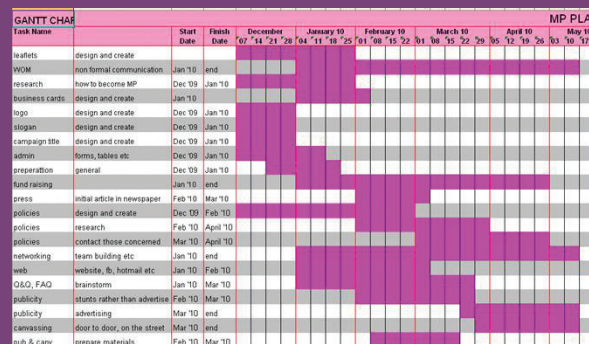
WHY SHOULD PEOPLE VOTE FOR YOU? List the top five reasons in order of effectiveness. If you cannot answer that question, don't despair, and don't give up, just keep reading.

WORK OUT YOUR STRATEGY BEFORE YOU THINK ABOUT TACTICS: You need a well thought-out election strategy, and now is the time to plan your campaign. Start by asking:

Where am I now? • Where do I want to be?

How am I going to get there? • Am I getting there?

Project Managers use bar charts, so draw one up for the Election Campaign:



THE OPPOSITION: do a SWOT analysis – what are their STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS? What are yours?

VOTES AT THE LAST ELECTION: what was the result last time? And the time before? Any trends you can identify?

VOLUNTEERS: who can you rely on to help you? What favours can you pull in? List out family, friends, colleagues and how many hours you think you can ask them for.

MANIFESTO: are you standing because you think you can do a better job than the current incumbent, or are you campaigning on a specific local issue? Which do you think will get you the most votes?

NOMINATION FORM: who will you get to propose and second you, and who will the other eight supporters be? Everyone will see this in the Polling Station, so if people see a name they know on the list, they may vote for you. Choose your ten people carefully.

ATTACKING: you will find on the doorstep that people generally do not like hearing politicians slanging each other. What are your chat-up lines going to be?

TIME NEEDED: add up on a daily basis from now until the election how many hours you and your volunteers will be able to spend. Work out how many, and which, hours each day people will be positive to a knock on the door. Will you door knock on Sundays or during Saturday afternoon sport? What is the latest time in the evening people will tolerate a knock on the door?

FUND RAISING: try and think up some fun ideas for raising funds for your campaign. You might also persuade your friends and neighbours that helping you in the election can be a bit of fun. You might decide to do a sponsored event. If you do, make sure a lot of people know about it, you could even ask for sponsorship on the doorstep. Here are some ideas: shave your head, grow a beard or moustache, do a long bicycle ride or a parachute jump, run a marathon, give up a favourite food, pastime or alcohol, be silent. Alternatively you could hold an **EVENT** such as a fete, a fair, a picnic, a concert, a raffle, bingo, book fair, Pub Quiz, auction, auction of promises, plant sale, jumble sale, cake sale, dinner party, talent show. This will raise your profile locally (make sure you invite the local press) and will be an opportunity for a lot of locals to meet and get to know you. Resist the large donation from a local housebuilder: planning is quasi-judicial, and not a way to repay favours.

TELLING: you are allowed to have one person outside each Polling Station wearing your rosette: will you try and organise a rota?

LOUD HAILER: these are normally excruciating, but if you feel one will help, do you know where to get one from?

LAST MINUTE DROP: will you do a leaflet drop in the last 48 hours before Polling in selected areas? Do you have the resources and the Budget to do this? Include details of the Polling Station locations and opening times.

HUMOUR: are you going to use any, or is this a serious business?

"We did a last drop of a photo of a 9 year old boy with a football saying "Please Vote for my Mum, so Dad and me can watch the football when she is at Council Meetings." She won by five votes, and some loved it and some hated it, but we will never know if it tipped the scales in her favour."

Know your Ward

ELECTORAL REGISTER: buy one today if you do not have one already. You'll get a free one when you are accepted as a candidate, but by then it is too late. You will have to pay for it, but buy it now.

You can get a marked up Register which shows who voted at the last election, but you will have to push for your local authority to sell you this version. It's worth having, so be pushy!

SPREADSHEET: get an electronic copy of the Register and convert it from table 1 (right) to table 2, then to table 3.

By doing this analysis you can work out (a) from the number of **Households** how many leaflets you need to print and (b) from the number of **Voters** which areas have the most voters per hour of street walking. Always print 5-10% more leaflets than you think you will need – the additional cost is normally minimal.

BLOCKS OF FLATS: go out one morning between 7am and 9am and check how many of the Blocks of Flats in your Ward have Tradesmen's buttons so you can get in with the postman to deliver leaflets.

MARKED REGISTER: where are the greatest number of people who did not vote? Could you convince them to vote for you? Don't spend too much time fretting. People who don't vote tend not to vote – but of course they may not vote in this area as they see no point. Concentrate on the voters who you can persuade to give their vote to you.

CENSUS DATA, OPINION POLLS, WARD PROFILES: search the internet for data that can help you segment your Ward and identify areas worth working.

In order to speak for the people you must know the people

Table 1

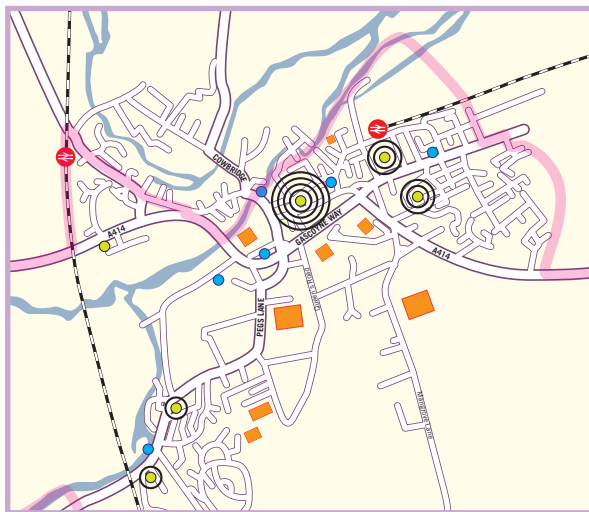
PD	DBO	Status	Post Name	Services	Date of Assessment	Parishes	Parish	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4	Address 5	Address 6	Post Code
FA	008		WATKINSON	FAIR					15		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	009		ROGER N	FAIR					15		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	010		WILSON	FAIR				GREENWAYS	1		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	011		JACQUELINE W	FAIR				GREENWAYS	3		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	012		WILSON	FAIR				QUEEN HILL HOUSE			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	013		JAMES R	FAIR				QUEEN HILL HOUSE			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	014		SCOTT	FAIR				QUEEN HILL HOUSE			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	015		WILSON	FAIR				QUEENHILL COTTAGE	1		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	016		WILSON	FAIR				QUEENHILL COTTAGE	1		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	017		DANIEL G	FAIR				DESMERES			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	018		WILSON	FAIR				DESMERES			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	019		POWELL C	FAIR				DESMERES			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	020		WILSON	FAIR				DESMERES			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	021		PETER M	FAIR				11010007			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	022		PETER D	FAIR				11010007			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	023		PETER D	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE			MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	024		CHRISTOPHER J	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	1		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	025		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	1		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	026		ALAN K	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	027		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	028		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	029		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	030		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	031		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	032		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	033		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	034		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	035		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	036		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	037		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	038		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	039		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	040		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	041		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	042		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	043		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	044		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	045		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	046		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	047		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	048		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	049		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	050		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	051		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	052		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	053		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	054		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	055		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	056		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	057		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	058		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	059		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	060		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	061		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	062		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	063		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	064		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	065		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	066		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	067		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	068		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	069		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	070		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	071		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	072		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	073		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	074		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	075		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	076		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	077		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	078		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	079		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	080		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	081		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	082		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	083		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	084		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	085		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	086		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	087		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	088		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	089		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	090		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	091		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	092		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	093		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	094		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	095		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	096		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	097		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	098		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	099		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS
FA	100		WILSON	FAIR				HERTFORD LODGE	2		MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS

Table 2

Streets, Voters and Houses/Flats													
PA	Voters	Address 2	Units	Address 4	Address 5	Address 6	Post Code						
FA	2	HERTFORD LODGE	1	MORGAN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BS						
FA	14		10	NOVA'S COURT GARDENS	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AJ						
FA	43		33	OGG CROFT	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AT						
FA	9		5	ODDOFELLOWS COURT	BULL PLAIN	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1EE					
FA	19	PALICO COURT	34	PARLIAMENT SQUARE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1EU						
FA	47	CHARLOTTE QUAY	2	PRIGL LANE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AG						
FA	13	PRIGLY COURT	12	PRIGLY STREET	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1EN						
FA	41	THE MALCOLM STREET HOME	5	PRIGLY STREET	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1EN						
FA	41	THE MALCOLM STREET HOME	5	PRIGLY STREET	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1EN						
FA	4	BAILEY HALL MEWS	6	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AY						
FA	24	QUEEN COURT	16	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AX						
FA	13	CLUNING MEWS	9	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BA						
FA	5	ROCKENBURY	4	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AJ						
FA	208		102	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8BA						
FA	12	THE ARBOUR	4	QUEEN ROAD	HERTFORD								
FA	18	PROVIDENCE PLACE	7	RAIMOND STREET	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1BB						
FA	3	WARMEN PLACE	2	RAIMOND STREET	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1BB						
FA	7	WHIT HART COURT	1	SALISBURY SQUARE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1BB						
FA	23		12	THE CROUSTRIES	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AD						
FA	41		5	THE WASH	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AD						
FA	41		10	VALLEY CLOSE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG13 8AD						
FA	10	CARLE COTTAGES	6	WATER LANE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1BS						
FA	4	OLD VINCANGE MEWS	3	BELL LANE	HERTFORD	HERTS	SG14 1BS						
FA	2		715	OTHER ELECTORALS									

IDENTIFY THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE WARD:

Where could you stand for an hour and be seen by a large number of voters from your Ward? Rank these in order of impact.



RESOURCES: Try and get your volunteers to do the deliveries so that you can concentrate on door knocking. Work out how many hours you need for deliveries. On average, probably allow 100 houses per hour, but it does depend on long paths/drives or Blocks of Flats. So a Ward of 3,000 houses and flats in a suburban area probably needs 30 hours for a delivery.

RATION IT OUT: When you door knock, there may be five voters in the house, but you will probably only meet one. Add up how many hours you will do door-knocking, how many houses you think will open the door per hour, and calculate how many voters you will reach personally. If you have limited time, look at the other ways of meeting voters and work out what is the best mix for the hours and volunteers you have at your disposal.

- Meeting places
- Shopping. The greater number of rings the greater the number of shops.
- Pubs
- Ward boundary

Know your Election Timetable

It will all happen more quickly than you realise: get your Nomination Form signed and submitted in good time so you can concentrate on campaigning.

Identify the Electoral Officer at the Council and make yourself known to them. They are often very helpful, but if yours is one of the stuffy ones, try making friends with the assistants in the office.

POSTAL VOTERS: these are the biggest problem of all...

If you deliver your leaflets before Postal Votes are sent out, the rest of the voters may forget you by election day.

You may not know who votes by post, so you cannot prioritise a visit. One solution is two leaflets, but that costs money and delivery time.

Consider a leaflet before the calling of the election (February or March) which does not count in the election expenses for the regulated period.

There is no obvious answer to this problem, but in a tight fight it can make all the difference. Printing costs have dropped in recent years, so two leaflets are probably the best answer.

Expenses

You need to know the Electoral Commission Guidance by memory if you are going to spend the maximum and get the best value for money. The website has the details: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

You have £740 (in 2019) per Ward plus 6p per voter, so if there are 7,500 voters in the Ward you must not spend more than £1,190.

You may have set yourself a Budget of £200, in which case this is not an issue for you.

Spending limits apply to the 'regulated' period – the period between the date a person becomes a candidate and polling day. **So spend as much as you can before you become a candidate.**

The following do not count as election expenses: Anything (except adverts) appearing in a newspaper or on a broadcast channel, public room for a meeting, volunteer time, free use of a main residence, free use of someone's personal car provided free, and free use of someone's computer or printing equipment.

However, the following **Administration Costs** do count: telephone bills, stationery and postage costs, electricity and other utility bills, use of photocopying or printing equipment, use of databases. **You must** declare the full commercial value for items or services which are (a) given free or at a discount of more than 10% and (b) worth £50 plus 0.5p per elector or more spent by a non-party campaigner.

So: if you are doing telephone canvassing, get as many of your volunteers as possible to use their private phones.

See if you can share leaflets or promotions or activities with other Independents in other Wards, as you can then split the cost.

If you are photocopying, get as many people as possible to do it, and keep the commercial cost for each person below £50.

If you organise hustings, the costs may not be an expense, unless you have been selective in inviting the other candidates.

Don't forget the IMPRINT (details of the full name and full postal address of the printer and promoter of your materials) – when in doubt, put it on: even balloons given out to kids need to have the imprint during the regulated period.

You only have to declare what you use during the regulated period. So if you pay £200 for 5,000 leaflets, and only deliver 4,000, you only declare £160. Keep the undelivered ones as proof until your return is accepted.

Making yourself known

Door Knocking: If you do not like door-knocking, then too bad – if you want to get elected you have to do it, so start psyching yourself up now. Don't be afraid! Nearly everyone is polite on the doorstep. Every knock builds the reputation of democracy, and the main complaint you will hear is 'nobody ever comes door knocking round here.'

Print or Photocopy some *"Sorry you were out"* cards to push through the doors where people are out. At least they know you tried to contact them. The main advantage of knocking on doors is that you get quality time with potential voters (especially if you make sure you target your doorsteps), but it is time intensive, exhausting and your knock may be unwelcome.

People want to meet the candidate, not a volunteer supporter. Do you door knock at the same time as delivering? You need to work out this one carefully or you may run out of time. Getting the leaflets out has to be the priority. Knock and Drop tends to have the highest response rate.

Canvass Cards: You can make these by trimming your Excel version of the Electoral Register to give you A4 lists. People like it if you can say "Good evening, Mrs Jones, can I introduce myself ...". You do not want to carry the whole Register with you, just take the streets you are

doing that evening, and you can mark up who says they will vote for you so you can keep in touch.

Some days, or nights, it will just be you. Chin up! We might not have party political volunteers but it makes us a far more memorable doorstep experience. If you are with a team, then it is worth a drink afterwards for every helper; or a curry one evening. But be careful during the regulated period that you are not guilty of *'treating'*!

Make sure you are up to speed on all the local issues that people may want to discuss. Particularly recent **Planning Applications** on the Local Authority website.

Market Stalls: Can you share a stall with another Independent in an adjoining Ward? Have an unusual attraction: a sports trophy, a vintage car, a craft demonstration, something that encourages people to stop and chat.

PROS: many leaflets will be distributed on your high street on busy shopping days, you will have some good conversations, and you will be seen by voters even if they do not stop and talk to you.

CONS: people are busy when they're out shopping, unwilling to stop. They may not be registered voters or in your Ward.

Opinion Formers: talk to people who talk to people: taxi drivers, hairdressers, shop keepers. Identify key local opinion formers and cultivate them.

Your brand: Independents are a brand, and IN fights hard to protect the brand. What is your brand? How do you promote your brand and protect it? Do you listen to people? Close your mouth and listen, impress people with your (perceived) wisdom and maturity. Work on getting a good reputation for your brand.

Touring the Pubs: print some beer mats, and leave them on the tables. You will be able to speak to groups of people, rather than individuals – if you can make this method work it will save you a lot of time. You will prompt debate that will continue after you have left their table. Before you start approaching tables ask the barman whether it is allowed. Introduce yourself politely, explaining who you are (i.e. NOT a party politician) and what you want (to find out what they care about locally). Keep your wits by sticking to soft drinks and don't spend any more than five or ten minutes with each table. If someone is annoyed by your presence, apologise and leave.

Rosettes: when the door is opened, the only way somebody knows you are not a Jehovah's Witness or a double glazing salesperson is if you are wearing a rosette. The colour is almost irrelevant, as there is no nationally recognised standard for Independents. Some use white, some use black and white, some use purple and white, the IN colours. IN have some in stock, but the internet will find you the best prices. If you buy before the regulated period, only declare (a) the cost of the ones you or your team actually wear and (b) assume they will last for at least five elections.

Posters: know your area – in many Wards they get torn down. Fewer people are willing to display them than thirty years ago. Window posters with your name in the largest possible letters are the most useful. Avoid fly-posting as it causes irritation, and if you put them on wheelie-bins you may get an injunction from the Council. Shops are unlikely to display posters, as it might lose them business from the opposition but it is worth asking – especially from 'independent' shops.

Train Stations: meeting trains morning or evening, but you need to catch the people walking to or from your Ward.

Balloons: giving away free balloons gets you talking to families, but you need helium and they can make a dent in your Budget.

Car Stickers: Can be effective with a good message.

Stunts: Have a look through the events in the run-up to the election and see if you can make an impact on any of them.

Protests: organise a march or a sit-in or a read-in, but be careful as these can backfire if you alienate more people than you attract.

Hustings: organise a hustings in the Ward, and make sure everybody knows you are the prime mover. They can be great fun, but do not be disappointed if only a few people turn up. Find a good venue and a good Chairperson.

Business cards: These can be printed very cheaply with details of your website and social media channels. They're less likely to be crumpled up than a flier, and people can put them in their wallets.

Messaging

Your biggest problem is that people will ask: *but what do Independents stand for?* Followed by: *but how do I know that you think what I think?* Your election manifesto is your best opportunity to address these questions directly.

But you need to have good answers to these questions on the doorstep, in the street, and on social media. Research suggests you have 9 seconds in which to make your mark: choose three key words, make three key points in no more than 27 words.

How do I construct my Personal Message?

- Being brief is hard, so work at it, use short words, short sentences, active language
- Tell your own story, even consider being a bit human and vulnerable: the voter is asking: "Does this candidate understand and care about people like me? Are you on my side?"
- Create a number of imaginary voters: profile them. Then ask: "how would each of these imaginary voters hear and respond to me and this issue?" Remember women make up the majority of voters, so your imaginary group should have more women than men.
- Remember how busy the voters are

PHOTOS: Photos can trump words: solo photos rarely work. Ask yourself: what information do I want to convey, and what emotions do I want to invoke?

NEGATIVE MESSAGES: They can be effective, but can backfire. Make sure you assess your own weaknesses and vulnerability and prepare for any negative messages from your opponents. Victims rarely win elections.

WHICH MESSAGE WORKS BEST? Do your research. Test ideas on people: find an Eeyore for your Tigger, somebody who is not afraid to tell you how it really sounds. Then set the Agenda and ruthlessly push it out: let the opposition fall into the trap of repeating your message in order to try and rubbish it.

BE SELECTIVE: Focus on a small number of issues: listen to the electorate, a proper cross-section, not just the ones who agree with you.

SOUNDBITES: Make people talk about the election on your terms, so give them some good soundbites. Good soundbites and pithy facts help fuel good conversations.

MAKE PEOPLE THINK—say things that they do not expect, turn their questions back to them and politely challenge their assumptions. To do this effectively, you need to research, prepare and memorise your script. If you have a script memorised, **be a good performer** and deliver your lines with sincerity: don't sound as though you are trotting out the same old platitudes.

Are you elected to **represent** or **govern**? If both, which takes priority and when? Read up on Edmund Burke and decide how you think your party opponents would face up to a conflict between Party Policy and the views of the Voters in your Ward.

One elected Independent councillor says: "*I kept it all very simple, in keeping with my stated aim of not trying to beat the parties at their own games, but being a straightforward local representative, from within the local community with nothing on my mind but doing a good job for local people.*"

Your Leaflet or Manifesto

There are two practical things to get right – the first is printing an eye-catching leaflet; the second is making sure that it is delivered (if you are doing only one leaflet) before the postal votes are sent in and remember some will post their Votes the minute they receive the form.

The Design: get hold of as many examples as you can, and evaluate them: what works? What doesn't?

A simple large and interesting headline is important: the voter will ask 'Why should I be interested in this?' Try giving your first draft to somebody for a few seconds, take it away, then ask what they remember?

Use sub-headings, but if you have too much bold type, italics and underlining the impact will be lost.

Immerse yourself in *The Sun* or *The Daily Mail*: why do more Oxbridge graduates work for the *Sun* than any other newspaper? Because it is really difficult to express complex ideas in simple sentences.

Don't write your leaflet for a *Guardian* or *Times* reader: write it in Tabloid English, model it on *The Daily Mirror* or *The Daily Express* or even *Hello! magazine*.

Third Party Endorsements: People want to know whether you think like they do. So you could include photos of well-known people in the community who support you, with a one sentence or so endorsement,

saying why they think you will do a good job. In choosing a product or service, a recommendation from somebody you know and trust is always helpful, and this works the same way in an election. People generally like to recommend; very few things beat a personal endorsement. Concentrate on getting people to speak well of you.

Direct mail: personally addressed items get a higher readership, so you could write to those voting for the first time, for example: this will influence both them and their parents. The effectiveness of the mailing is all about the power of the story the letter has to tell: the best letters have only one point, and start with something the reader will agree with. It usually works best if it includes a way for people to respond. But put the right stamps on the envelopes!

Email: if you are able to collect email addresses, then MailChimp is a good way to send out multiple emails. Make sure people can unsubscribe if they want to.

Give them the opportunity to respond: and if they do, make sure you respond (and add them to your database).

Website and Social Media

Always keep in mind the objective: you are trying to find the people who will vote for you, and then you want to corral them into the Polling Station to cast their vote for you. You want them to tell their friends to vote for you, too.

Remember different communication channels require different skills: so start by writing a document that gives a clear set of agreed messages that can be adapted to the appropriate channel.

The secret of getting a large social media following is that there is no secret: you have to build it one effort at a time over the longhaul, and once you are online you need to keep working it.

Never Forget that Data is your lifeblood:

- Who are the most important voters to contact?
- which messages work best with these people?
- how do we get hold of them?
- who is willing to help contact them?

But Data degrades over time: so accumulate followers steadily, and start as early as possible. Get everybody in your team to collect data in their own way from their own social media networks. Who and what do they already know? Collect data at events you hold. Remember people talk about politics not with political nerds but with their normal friends: so aim to get into their existing networks. Check GDPR: if you are a lone independent, you are unlikely to fall foul of the regulations, but if you are a group or a local party you need to check.

WEBSITE: try learning WordPress, and doing it yourself. There are other packages, but that seems to be becoming the market leader. Putting your twitter account on the home page allows people to see things are always happening and they can easily link in with you. “Join the campaign now” or “donate now” can be useful buttons on your site. The site is a vehicle and wins no votes on its own. Keep it simple and nothing more than two clicks away.

SOCIAL MEDIA: In marketing, experts reckon a person will need to have heard of the product (that's you) five to seven times before they will trust you enough to buy, or in your case, vote for you. People use different channels, so you need to do that too. You can use Hootsuite or similar to link your Twitter and Facebook accounts so that what you write, your posts, appear on both. Twitter may be better for broadcasting what you are doing and seeking responses, Facebook is better for longer articles or where you may enter into a conversation. Linked In tends to be more of a professional network and you can put some good articles there.

INSTAGRAM is good for words and pictures. Other options are Next Door, Village Hall, Council or event Facebook and Twitter accounts abound. Search for these, join them early and write weekly. They are very useful and well watched by local people. Once you are a candidate, they may not let you join. You cannot use them to say “vote for me”, but you can say “please vote on Thursday!”

SHARING: Most useful are short, good humoured comments, with a picture or very short video, ones that people will want to share. Link them to other organisations, so that more people see your post, and it is not only people who follow you. To create short videos, make sure there is good light, so you look fresh and accessible. Be careful with the background. Invest in a small microphone for taking small 90 second videos fresh whilst at events. You may get several thousand people seeing your post, so make sure it is correct!

Gain more contacts and followers, by writing on other relevant sites with information that will interest them. Search friends of comparable councillors and ask to befriend them. You can private message them too. Private message

is useful as they are more read, but that person could copy and paste your words onto their public site, so it's not private after that!

TROLLS: Write positive comments that invite support. Try not to attract "trolls", people whose job is to try and undermine you in public. Don't ignore bad stuff. The best thing to do is to respond with proof of the correct facts, and not get heavy or accusing. Try and acquire some good trolls to counter on your behalf. Do report anything that is slanderous, sexist, racist and so on using the online buttons on Facebook and Twitter, and tell the police. There is advice on handling intimidation at www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation, and you should block really offensive individuals.

THE SECRET OF GETTING A LARGE SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWING IS THAT THERE IS NO SECRET!

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Press, Radio and Local TV

One way to raise your profile is through your local media. People who tune into the local media are the same people who go to the Ballot Box. You need to get to know these people, and they need to get to know you.

Journalists: get to know them, their values and their deadlines. But never forget that they are not your friends, and nothing is 'off the record'.

An interview: You are standing for election as an independent candidate: is that newsworthy in your area? Who are your local journalists – for print and broadcast media? You need to give them a call, introduce yourself and explain why you are standing as an independent. Ask them whether you can meet up and be interviewed. If they agree, make sure you do your homework, and decide on the key message you want to get across. Then practice possible questions and answers with a friend, so you can begin to learn to relax and not be panicked when under searching questioning.

Letters: If you can't get an interview, send letters to your local papers on subjects they have covered as news in their pages. If you write in week after week, you are not going to get printed regularly. After the first few letters, the editor will say: *"Not another letter from that independent candidate!"* Once every three weeks is plenty. **You cannot win an election by relying on the local paper.** Be pertinent, succinct and to the point. Use strong and emotive language.

Social events: Invite your local press to public meetings: hustings and open meetings; fundraisers. Any local event that you will be attending deserves a press release.

How do I write a press release? Always include the Five W's: **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN** and **WHY?**

Make it newsworthy: it must be topical, there must be a human angle, don't be boring. If you include photos, there should be action and you need to be easily recognisable.

When you have drafted your Press Release, ask yourself: *"but is it a story?"* You are probably madly interested in local politics, but 99% of your voters are not. Get a second opinion on a Press Release from your most cynical supporter (your spouse or partner?). Journalists and the Media want stories.

A good story delivers news – something that would be of interest to your constituents that they did not already know. This can be about you, about your campaign or about something out of the ordinary that you have witnessed on the campaign trail.

So think what would make a good story, make your story happen, and tell everybody your story. We generally make our own luck, with the help of an attention-grabbing press release.

Make sure you get your facts right, and make sure anybody who is quoted has approved the quote.

IS IT A STORY?

Get out the vote!

It is now Polling Day, and you may be worn out, but this is it! This is what it has all been about. No G&T until 10pm, so now you have to concentrate on GOTV.

The voter deciding whether or not to go out to vote will be asking:

- Will my vote make a difference?
- how will the result matter for me?
- who do I want to vote for?

By now the work has been done, but it is still worth walking around, visting the Polling Stations, perhaps the sight of you may just convince some voters that your obvious enthusiasm is worth rewarding.

Last word? Perhaps an encouragement to focus on Excellence, Integrity, Humility and Humour, and while it is true we learn more from failure than from success, we really learn best from failure and success. Whatever the outcome of the election, begin now to think about what you will do differently next time!



ELECTIONS ON A SHOE STRING

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The Independent Network

Independent Network is a Registered National Political Party in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It aims to promote the Independent 'brand' and offers Independent candidates a common identity. We endorse candidates who commit to the Bell Principles – the first set of Conduct Guidelines created by a political organisation. We act as a central hub of resources and contacts, helping campaigning Independents with training and press events. IN campaigns in the national media for more recognition of the benefits of Independents, and enables Independent candidates across the UK to learn from each other.

IN also endorses local Independent groups. Once a group is endorsed, it then also has the power to endorse local candidates committed to the Bell Principles. Contact us for more information:

Website: www.independentnetwork.org.uk | **Email:** info@independentnetwork.org.uk

Council of Reference:

*Martin Bell OBE, Professor Colin Copus,
Cllr Keith Ross OBE, Dr Richard Taylor*

Independent Network:

Leader: Cllr Marianne Overton MBE **Nominating Officer:** Cllr Darren Hayday **Campaigns Officer:** Cllr Nikki Dillon **Treasurer:** Jim Thornton

The Bell Principles

We will:

- abide wholeheartedly by the spirit and letter of the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by Lord Nolan in 1995: *selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership*
- be guided by considered evidence, our real world experience and expertise, our constituencies and our consciences
- be free from the control of any political party, pressure group or whip
- be non-discriminatory, ethical and committed to pluralism
- make decisions transparently and openly at every stage and level of the political process, enabling people to see how decisions are made and the evidence on which they are based
- listen, consulting our communities constantly and innovatively
- treat political opponents with courtesy and respect, challenging them when we believe they are wrong, and agreeing with them when we believe they are right
- resist abuses of power and patronage and promote democracy at every level
- claim expenses, salaries and compensation openly so the public can judge the value for money of our activities.



VOTE FOR A PERSON, NOT A PARTY