

Remember to vote in the Scottish Parliamentary Election 5 May 2011

With both the Scottish Parliamentary elections and the first UK-wide referendum in over 30 years taking place on Thursday 5 May, the City of Edinburgh Council is urging voters in the city to be ready to have their say.

Many residents may be taking advantage of the upcoming bank holidays and planning to be on holiday on 5 May. However, they can ensure their voice is still heard by applying to vote by post or by proxy.

Sue Bruce, Returning Officer for Edinburgh, said: "I would encourage anyone in this situation to act now as the deadline for voter registration, postal and proxy votes is fast approaching."

In the Scottish Parliamentary elections, voters in Edinburgh will be able to cast their vote for who they want to represent them in the six constituency areas: Edinburgh Central; Edinburgh Eastern; Edinburgh Northern and Leith; Edinburgh Pentlands; Edinburgh Southern; Edinburgh Western. They will also have a vote to elect the 7 MSPs for the Lothian Region.

The referendum is completely separate and deals with the voting system used for elections to the UK Parliament. The question being put to voters on 5 May is: "At present, the UK uses the 'first past the post' system to elect MPs to the House of Commons. Should the 'alternative vote' system be used instead?"

Andy O'Neill, Head of the Electoral Commission's Scotland Office, said: "People don't always realise that they can have their say in different ways, including by post or by asking

someone you trust (a 'proxy') to cast your vote for you. We know that the way bank holidays fall this spring means that many people may be away from home on Thursday 5 May, so we're making sure that people who want a postal or proxy vote know what they need to do in advance."

For further information on registration, postal and proxy votes call the Lothian Valuation Joint Board on 0131 344 2500 or download a form from <http://www.lothian-vjb.gov.uk> to make sure you are all set for polling day on 5 May.

The deadline for applying for a postal vote for the 5 May polls is 5pm on Thursday 14 April.

The deadline to register to vote for the May polls is 5pm Friday, 15 April

The deadline for applying for a proxy vote for the 5 May polls is 5pm on Thursday 21 April.

A person can vote in the Scottish Parliamentary elections and the referendum if they are on the electoral register, are 18 or over on 5 May and are:

- * A British citizen, or
- * A qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or
- * A citizen of the Irish Republic

Citizens of other European Union countries registered to vote in Scotland can vote in the Scottish Parliamentary elections. However, they can't vote in the referendum.