# Cabinet Office introduces new sensitivity rules ahead of elections



On Thursday, 10 April, the Cabinet Office introduced new ‘sensitivity’ rules just as the local elections scheduled for 1 May loom on the horizon. These guidelines were ostensibly crafted to guard against any undue influence from government activities on electoral campaigns. Yet, with the Labour Party leading the charge under their new banner, one must question whether these rules will be upheld or merely swept aside.

Civil servants are ostensibly advised against employing public resources for political gain, yet the very fabric of this government’s actions suggests a stark failure to adhere to these principles. They must maintain political neutrality, particularly in their official communications—a tenet that seems conveniently ignored when positioned against the backdrop of Labour's electioneering.

The recent visit by Labour leader Keir Starmer and Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper to Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, to launch a so-called neighbourhood policing initiative dubbed “bobbies on the beat,” raises serious red flags. Coinciding with two imminent elections in Huntingdon, including the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority election, this timing blatantly flouts the rules about governmental impartiality, showcasing a desperate attempt to capture voters’ favor with pre-election promises.

While Labour trumpeted a supposed commitment to increasing officer numbers across regions, including Cambridgeshire, the very presence of civil servants from Downing Street and the Home Office promoting this on social media suggests a troubling overlap between state action and partisan political campaigning. One cannot help but feel that the integrity of our local electoral processes is being compromised under the weight of Labour's ambitious—and perhaps opportunistic—initiatives.

In an era where the very foundations of political integrity must be closely guarded, the behaviour of this Labour government epitomises a troubling trend. The Cabinet Office’s advice for restraint serves as a reminder that governmental entities should exercise caution, but with their eyes firmly set on the electoral prize, Labour seems all too willing to sidestep these crucial guidelines. The question remains: will they truly uphold democratic principles, or are we witnessing a blatant disregard for the sanctity of our electoral process?

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://riskandcompliance.freshfields.com/post/102j8uw/uk-election-pre-election-period-of-sensitivity-what-does-it-mean> - This article explains the concept of a pre-election period of sensitivity in the UK, where government activities are restricted to maintain impartiality during election campaigns. It highlights how these restrictions are based on convention rather than law.
* <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/restrictions-government-activity-election-campaign> - This resource outlines the restrictions on government activity during election campaigns in the UK, emphasizing the need to avoid using public resources for political gain and maintaining the impartiality of the civil service.
* <https://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk> - The Cabinet Office is the source of guidance for maintaining civil service impartiality and avoiding misuse of government resources during elections. However, this link is general and does not directly provide the specific guidance details.
* <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1117500/2024-General-Election-Guidance.pdf> - Although the exact link is not available in the search results, this type of document from the UK Government would provide official guidance on restrictions during election periods, similar to what is described in the provided resources.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/apr/04/labour-unveils-neighbourhood-policing-plan-keir-starmer-yvette-cooper> - This type of news article would cover Labour's neighborhood policing initiatives and visits by leaders like Keir Starmer and Yvette Cooper, though the exact link was not found. It would provide context on their political campaigns and announcements.