GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

ELECTION STANDARDS

1   PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1   To allow Members to consider and note the Elections performance and performance standards.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   The Committee consider and note the contents of the report.

3   KEY ISSUES

3.1   The past twelve months have seen the Electoral Registration and Election Service faced with many changes and challenges due to new elections and changes to Legislation and working practices.

3.2   With new elections in November 2012 for the Police and Crime Commissioner being introduced the Annual Canvass was brought forward and commenced on the1st June 2012 with a final publication date of the 16th October 2012. This in itself posed no problems with all the canvassers being much happier carrying out their duties in the better weather. The percentage return was 92% which is slightly higher than in previous years.

3.3   **Police and Crime Commissioner Election**

On the 15th November 2012, the inaugural election's to elect a Police and Crime Commissioner for all of the Police Authority areas within England and Wales were held.   Concern was expressed by the Local Returning Officers concerning the time . of year, weather, staff and venue availability, elector understanding, Candidate information and the expected turnout. This would also be the first elections to be held nationally using the Supplementary Vote System.

Each Police area had a Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) appointed to act as the overall co-ordinator of the Election. Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland were led by Christine Fisher from North West Leicestershire. Across Leicestershire we worked as one team and shared protocols that covered responsibility, training, project management and methods of working, taking into account our local needs and resources.

The whole day proved to be non-problematical. The only thing the practitioners were correct about was the turnout which proved to be low. The verification and count were held on Friday 16th November. As we were using SVS for the first time the initial process was slower than normal due to the number of spoilt papers that had to be adjudicated.   The official declaration was made before 5.00pm.

3.4   In addition to the Police and Crime Commissions Election three further elections were held (Egerton Ward By Election, Asfordby Parish Council, Asfordby Ward By

Election).No problems were encountered. All three elections were successfully run.

3.5 The Electoral Registration Officer and the Returning Officer are required to complete Performance Standard monitoring in conjunction with the Electoral Commission. The Performance Standards for Electoral Registration are self-assessment with the Electoral Commission choosing a sample of 10% of authority to be inspected.

3.6 Following the assessment for 2012 the table below shows how The Authority is performing against the Electoral Registration standards:-

	Performance standard	Assessment against standard
Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records	1 Using information sources to verify entries on the register of electors and identify potential new electors	ABOVE
	2 Maintaining the property database	ABOVE
	3 House to house enquiries	MEET
Integrity	4 Maintaining the integrity of registration and absent vote applications	ABOVE
	5 Supply and security of the register and absent voter lists	ABOVE
Participation	6 Public awareness strategy	ABOVE
	7 Working with partners	ABOVE
	8 Accessibility and communication of information	ABOVE
Planning and organisation	9 Planning for rolling registration and annual canvass	ABOVE
	10 Training	ABOVE

3.7 During this assessment we were able to go to above on three of the standards that we were just meeting before. For Electoral Registration you are able to go above the standard, but for Elections you are only able to meet the standard.

3.8 The Table below shows the assessment for Elections Standards for the Police and Crime Commissioners Election 15th November 2012

	Performance standard	Assessment
Planning and organisation	1a: Planning for an election	Meeting the Standard
Administering the poll	2a: Polling station set-up	Meeting the Standard
	2b: Producing ballot papers, poll cards and notices	Meeting the Standard
Absent voting	3a: Producing postal vote stationery	Meeting the Standard

	3b: Issuing of postal votes	Meeting the Standard
	3c: Receiving and opening postal votes	Meeting the Standard
Verifying and counting the votes	4a: Effective verification and count processes	Meeting the Standard
After the declaration of results	5a: Forwarding and storage of documents	Meeting the Standard
	5b: Review of election procedures	Meeting the Standard

3.9 **Leicestershire County Council Election – 5th May 2013**

On the 5th May 2013 elections were held to elect one councillor to each of the Borough's four County Council Divisions. We ran these elections on behalf of Leicestershire County Council and once again we worked as a Leicestershire Team with regular County Electoral Administrator Group meetings. The elections ran smoothly and efficiently. The verification and count were held on Friday 6th May at the request of Leicestershire County Council. The count staff worked very efficiently and all of our results were declared by 1.00pm.

Leicestershire as a whole were chosen to be inspected, so in addition we were required to forward to the Electoral Commission all our protocols, procedures, project plans and Risk Assessments and complete and submitted seven performance monitoring schedules.

Below is the table following submission of all the information:-

	Performance standard	Assessment
Planning and organisation	1a: Planning for an election	Meeting the Standard
Administering the poll	2a: Polling station set-up	Meeting the Standard
	2b: Producing ballot papers, poll cards and notices	Meeting the Standard
Absent voting	3a: Producing postal vote stationery	Meeting the Standard
	3b: Issuing of postal votes	Meeting the Standard
	3c: Receiving and opening postal votes	Meeting the Standard
Verifying and counting the votes	4a: Effective verification and count processes	Meeting the Standard
After the declaration of results	5a: Forwarding and storage of documents	Meeting the Standard
	5b: Review of election procedures	Meeting the Standard

3.10 The date for the European Parliamentary Election has been brought forward to the

22nd May 2014. We will be carrying out the count on the Sunday evening in line with the final polling stations closing across the rest of Europe.

3.11 July 2014 will see the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration. During the last two months all authorities have been carrying out Confirmation Dry Runs to test the digital channels that have been established by the Cabinet Office. Melton carried out theirs on the 31st July with our data being successfully sent through the digital channel and then to DWP for matching. The data was successfully received back 5 days later and we achieved a match rating of 81.5%. We are now in the process of carrying out Local Data Matching on the 19.5% that was marked with an amber or red with the hope to increase the match rate to 92%. When IER goes live it will completely alter the way electoral registration is carried out, thus giving rise to another changing year for the service.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 Elections and Electoral Registration is run in line with the relevant legislation.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 There are no community safety issues directly arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no equality issues directly arising from this report.

9.0 RISKS

There are no direct risks related to this report.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 There is no requirement for consultation on this matter.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All Wards

Contact Officer Angela Tebbutt / Sally Renwick
Date: Sept 2013
Appendices : None
Background
Papers:
Reference : X: Committees/Governance/2013/14