

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: Mobile Polling Units
Committee: Customers and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date: 23 November 2009
Cabinet Member: Councillor Ricketts
CMT Member: Director for Corporate Support
Author: Nigel Spilsbury (Electoral Services Manager)
Contact: Tel no: 01752 304861
Email: nigel.spilsbury@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref: E3/PCC/2008
Part: 1

Executive Summary:

A report was submitted by the Electoral Services Manager to the Panel on 30 March 2009 providing details of an equality impact assessment and programme for replacing the existing stock of mobile polling units. Following consideration of this report the panel requested a further report to provide an update on the 'testing' of the new style of mobile polling unit at the European Parliamentary election held on 4 June 2009.

Corporate Plan 2009-2012:

This report is in line with the Corporate Improvement Priorities of: -

- 1) Improving customer service: ensuring access to the service is equally available to all customers;
 - 2) Improving community involvement and engagement: promoting engagement and participation in the electoral process;
 - 3) Value for money: providing a quality best value service.
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Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

In addition to current budgetary provisions for funding the replacement of one mobile polling unit per year, extra funding will be taken from the City Council elections budget to ensure replacement is undertaken as quickly as possible by purchasing five units in financial year 2009-2010 and five in 2013-2014 when there are no City Council elections scheduled.

Other Implications: e.g. Section 17 Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management, Equalities Impact Assessment, etc.

The rolling programme of access improvements and polling station reviews mentioned in this report should provide for improved voting facilities.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

That the report is noted.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

Alternative polling locations considered in the report considered by the Panel at the meeting held on the 30 March 2009.

Background papers:

Electoral Administration Act 2006

Report to the City Council 10th December 2007 – Review of Polling Arrangements 2007

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel 15th September 2008 – City Council Elections Review 2008

Report to the City Council 1st December 2008 – Polling District Boundary Alterations 2008

Report from Manufacturing Service

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 30 March 2009

Sign off:

Head of Fin	CeS F90 000 2	Head of Leg	DV S10 61	Head of HR		Head of AM		Head of IT		Head of Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Giles Perritt											

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A report was submitted by the Electoral Services Manager to the Panel on 30 March 2009 providing details of an equality impact assessment and programme for replacing the existing stock of mobile polling units. Following consideration of this report the panel requested a further report to provide an update on the 'testing' of the new style of mobile polling unit at the European Parliamentary election held on 4 June 2009.

2.0 Mobile polling units - New design

- 2.1 For some time the City Council's contractor, the Manufacturing Service (now Plymouth Community Homes) has been working towards replacing the existing stock with a lower level design to make the unit more easily accessible. A lower level design obviously makes a great deal of sense as the ramp will be virtually flat.

This type of unit has several advantages such as lower level access, wider doors, more space inside and the provision of electricity via a generator. It also contains built in toilet facilities, running hot and cold water serving a wash hand basin, a sink unit in the kitchen area, integral generator compartment with acoustic lining and exhaust, built in polling booths and kitchen area.

- 2.2 The new unit was tested at the European Parliamentary elections held on the 4th June 2009 at Kneele Gardens, Hartley Vale and provided a good opportunity to make sure that the unit is 'fit for purpose' and also allow any modifications to be made to further units purchased.
- 2.3 In almost all respects the new style unit proved a success except for some vibration when the built in generator was switched on. In addition a number of minor adjustments have been suggested; a metal frame for a 'slot-in' notice board to be fixed outside of the unit, a wall mounted bracket for the fire extinguisher, hooks in polling booths to attach pencils, battery operated strip light for toilet as a backup, move coat hooks, boards inside polling unit for notices.
- 2.4 To overcome the problem of vibration the Manufacturing Service developed and fitted an 'anti-vibration' floor to the new style unit. They also undertook some of the minor adjustments mentioned in paragraph 2.3.
- 2.5 The modifications were tested at the Ham ward by- election held on the 3 September. The vibration has now been significantly reduced which will allow the new style unit to be sited at most of the current locations (one or two locations to be reviewed). Any further minor adjustments to the new unit will be carried out prior to the 2010 elections and any orders placed for further units will incorporate the adjustments mentioned in this report

3.0 Purchase of the new style units

- 3.1 The report of 30 March 2009 provided details of the costs.
- 3.2 However, the fitting of an 'anti vibration' floor and undertaking the minor adjustments described will obviously add to the cost price. Fitting an anti-vibration floor will cost £1,022 and the remaining adjustments around £500. This increases the price for purchasing one unit from £14,240 to around £16,000. Of course as mentioned in the previous report (30 March 2009) price reductions can be negotiated by purchasing more than one unit at a time.

This compares with current replacement costs of £10,000 per unit.

- 3.3 The purchase of replacement mobile units will be funded from the annual replacement programme budget which allows the service to purchase one unit per year and five from the City Council elections budget during years that no local elections are scheduled (2009 and 2013). This will enable the replacement of the current stock of mobile units to be undertaken in a much shorter time-frame, thus allowing the improvements to be in place earlier than current budgetary provisions allow for.

As the purchase is considered as high value i.e. above the £75k ceiling, no order will be placed for the mobile units until the City Council's procurement procedures have been completed. This should achieve the best possible value in accordance with corporate improvement priorities. It is envisaged that this procedure will be completed by mid- December.

Summary: -

How purchased	Number purchased	Estimated additional cost	Financial year
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2008 – 2009
From City Council budget	5	£80,000	2009 – 2010
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2009 – 2010
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2010 – 2011
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2011 – 2012
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2012 – 2013
From City Council budget	5	£80,000	2013 – 2014
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2013 – 2014
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2014 – 2015
Current annual Replacement programme	1	Nil	2015 – 2016

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 That the report is noted.