

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS 2017



No.	Review recommendation	Response	Status	Anticipated completion date	Lead
1	The Council needs to take urgent action to review its recruitment strategy to attract appropriately skilled and experienced registration and elections staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment strategy for elections staff has been drafted and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of a specialist search firm to explore the market for recruitment of key Head of Elections Service position. • Benchmarking to determine grading levels for the core team. • Job descriptions have been comprehensively reviewed to better reflect skills and experience requirements. • New staff structure proposed and consultation commenced. • National advertisement for team vacancies and accompanying regional campaign. • Enhanced interim arrangements remain until recruitment complete. • Development of roles for wider non-specialist staff groups. 	In progress	October 2017	Interim Strategic Director Transformation and Change
2	The Council needs to act without delay to recruit additional permanent and technically capable staff to the core team and achieve a compliment of staff and management consistent with the levels recommended by the AEA and by the Council's own analysis.	AEA Technical consultant engaged as at 10 July 2017 – providing expert technical support to ensure a safe and successful canvass and next election.	Complete	July 2017	Interim Elections Operations Manager

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taking into account the AEA recommendations and our own analysis of the local challenges to electoral registration plans are in place to increase our core team from 6.0 FTE to 12.0 FTE ▪ Recruitment in progress for additional 2x Electoral Services Clerks and 1 x Business Apprentice. ▪ Consultation underway for additional 1x Team Leader and 1x Electoral Services Officer. ▪ Permanent core team anticipated to be in place by autumn 2017. 	In progress	October 2017	
			In progress	October 2017	
			In progress	November 2017	
3	<p>Pending these appointments, the Council needs to recruit temporary staff who have the salient detailed operational experience to manage the team, build capacity, provide focus, direction and integration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interim staff have been recruited into the following positions within the Elections Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEA Consultant – Technical Manager • Operational Manager • Programme Manager ▪ These temporary appointments are supplemented by dedicated programme and project management resource 1 x Programme Manager, 1x Project Manager, and 3x Business Analysts. 	Complete	July 2017	Interim Elections Operations Manager
4	<p>Resources need to be sufficient and experienced to undertake the canvass and maintain the register.</p> <p>Plan and prepare for the possibility of a General Election and plan for the local election in 2018.</p> <p>This needs to include properly documented operating procedures, systems and process to ensure continuity, robust quality assurance and checking procedures, effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The canvass is in progress and is taking place between 18 August and 31 November 2017. ▪ Canvass Delivery Plan written – operational task plans and procedures along with clear quality assurance and checking procedures have been produced. ▪ Accompanying resource requirements confirmed. Ancillary canvass staff in place 2x Electoral Services Assistants and 1x Apprentice. ▪ Canvass plan is in use with regular check points with the team to review task status and assign upcoming tasks. 	In progress	November 2017 for completion of the canvass	Interim Elections Operations Manager

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	communication and completion of tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General Election Plan drafted – operational task plans and procedures along with clear quality assurance and checking procedures have been produced. Accompanying resource requirements identified for both snap and planned General Election. ▪ Gateways within the Electoral Services Programme will ensure key documentation, processes and procedures are fit for purpose and robust through both internal testing and external peer challenge. 		<p>September 2017 for a snap election Response Plan</p> <p>Ongoing, systematic approach to quality assurance of procedures, processes and systems</p>	
5	The Council should refresh and extend its business process analysis of the service activities with a view to improving their efficiency and effectiveness, including the full migration to the new EMS system and its embedding within operating procedures of the service. This should also address the implementation of proposals to embed non-specialist roles in other parts of the Council and particularly customer/elector contact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated 3x business analysis resource are provided as part of the Electoral Service Programme. ▪ The programme delivered successful migration to the new Election Management System (EMS) during August 2017. ▪ Key digital customer channels have been reviewed and encouragement to register in place. ▪ Specific non-specialist staff have been briefed to support and advise customers during canvass in front facing locations such as Libraries and via the main Council phone line. ▪ Access to parts of the EMS will enable additional specific non-specialist resource to support key points in the electoral cycle, enhance customer contacts and support local data matching. ▪ Telephony analysis in progress and information sharing protocols being drafted. 	In progress	December 2017	Interim Elections Operations Manager

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6	Further and more detailed planning should be undertaken with regards to communications during an election period; including in the handling of communications when an error occurs. The development of such a plan should engage key stakeholders including the local media, politicians and their agents, the Electoral Commission and the Council's contact centre. This plan needs to be embedded within the operating procedures of the registration and elections service and in the civil emergency procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the proactive Communications Plans developed for the 2016 local and 2017 GE and identify improvements ▪ Identify elections risks jointly with service lead and appropriate communications responses for issues ▪ Engage stakeholders (as identified) in the development of a proactive Communications Plan for Elections 2018 ▪ Develop a reactive crisis communications plan for elections which is aligned with Civil Protection and embedded in operational service delivery. Seek external peer review on the plan to strengthen resilience of proposed approach. 	In progress	October 2017	Head of Public and Partner Relations
7	The ARO should establish an improvement plan taking account of these recommendations and maintain sufficient frequency of the elections project board to hold line management to account for the delivery against the improvement plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chief Executive established an internal Electoral Service Improvement Programme in July 2017. ▪ An Electoral Service Improvement Plan is being developed with a focus on capability, rigour and resilience with clear timescales and responsibilities. ▪ The Elections Board has oversight of development and delivery of the improvement plan. ▪ The Elections Board is meeting fortnightly to oversee the improvement plan. ▪ The Terms of Reference for the Elections Board have been reviewed and agreed (September 2017). 	<p>Complete in terms of establishing improvement plan and aligning to Elections Board</p> <p>Ongoing in terms of holding line management to account for delivery</p>	September 2017	Chief Executive

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8	The Council should hold the ARO to account for the overall delivery of planned improvements through a cross-party committee of the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is proposed to Full Council on 25 September 2017 that the Constitutional Review Group (CRG), a cross-party group of Councillors, monitor the improvement plan and hold the Acting Returning Officer to account for progress. These meetings are scheduled monthly and can occur more frequently if required. ▪ CRG, via its Chair, would report direct to Council. 	In progress	September 2017 for Council decision	Leader
9	The ARO and the Electoral Commission should agree a process and a frequency of reporting to enable the Commission to offer ongoing advice and to satisfy the commission that the necessary improvements are being delivered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ARO and Electoral Commission have scheduled a series of check-in points where progress against the improvement plan and performance standards will be reviewed. ▪ Electoral Commission guidance will also be sought at relevant points in between these scheduled check-points. ▪ Electoral Commission representatives have open invites to the Strategic Election Board and receive papers. 	Complete in terms of establishing the frequency of reporting Ongoing in terms of satisfying the commission on progress	August 2017	Chief Executive
10	The ARO should consider a further independent review in January 2018 to assess progress and preparedness for May 2018 elections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ARO agrees that a further independent review of progress and preparedness for May 2018 elections would be beneficial and will schedule such a review for January 2018. ▪ Gateway reviews with external peers will also be established as part of the Electoral Services Improvement Programme to provide external quality assurance on progress at appropriate points. 	In progress	January 2018	Assistant Chief Executive