

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 7TH JANUARY 2014

AGENDA ITEM 7.3 - ELECTIONS 2014 UPDATE AND TOWER HAMLETS LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT

TABLED APPENDIX 'B'

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND REASONS FOR URGENCY

Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for public access to meetings of principal councils and their non-executive committees and sub-committees, as well as to the business papers of those meetings. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee is covered by this public access regime by virtue of section 9FA(6)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000.

A key requirement of Part 5A of the Local Government Act 1972 is that the agenda and any report to be considered at a council or committee meeting should be available for inspection by members of the public five clear days before the meeting. There are exceptions where the meeting is called on shorter notice or an item is added late to the agenda. The apparent intention of the publication requirement is to enable public participation in local authority decision making.

Section 100B(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that an item of business may not be considered at a council or committee meeting unless either –

- the item has been available for inspection for the required length of time; or
- by reason of special circumstances, which shall be specified in the minutes, the chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

In this case, the principal report was published with the agenda five clear days in advance of the meeting. The report identified that further information would be forthcoming at a later date, which is contained within this appendix. As the information concerns work being done to prepare for the elections to take place on 22 May 2014 and no decision is being required by the Committee, the Chair of the Committee may take the view that it is appropriate to consider the additional information despite it not having been published five clear days in advance of the meeting.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A report of the Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer is included in the agenda for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at item 7.3.
- 1.2 The report sets out information as previously reported on the ongoing work in liaison with the Metropolitan Police and Electoral Commission to ensure

integrity of the electoral registration and elections processes; including the development of a local code of conduct.

1.3 As indicated in the circulated report, this tabled Appendix B sets out further information and a progress update in this work.

1.4 The appendix includes information in the following sections:-

- Outline assessment of key risk areas, contingency and actions taken
- Timetable of events for Electoral Services in 2014
- Annual Canvass 2013/14 and percentage returns
- Confirmation letters 2014
- Rolling Registration 2013 and 2014 including monthly numbers of additions, deletions and amendments received
- Individual Electoral Registration
- New wards and polling districts

2. KEY RISKS AND CONTINGENCIES

2.1 The table below outlines key risks in relation to elections integrity issues and the contingencies, actions and responsibilities identified in response.

Risk	Contingency/ action	Action taken/ comments	Responsible officer
<p>1. Code of Conduct: Local Integrity Protocol</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare local protocol • Ensure party & independent candidates sign up to local protocol - transparency of the election • Dedicated email address for complaints & registration 	<p>Endorsed by Electoral Commission (EC) and Metropolitan Police (MP)</p> <p>Candidates/Agents/ Campaigners/ Members</p> <p>Staff rota in place from 18 February 2014 – response within 24 hours</p>	<p>All Parties/ Electoral Commission, Met Police, Borough Police</p> <p>JW/LS</p> <p>LS/JP</p>

Risk	Contingency/ action	Action taken/ comments	Responsible officer
	<p>allegations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allegations for Police investigation 	<p>Allegation passed to Police within 24 hours & investigated within 48 hours</p>	<p>JW/LS</p>
<p>2. Registration: Inc. failure to meet statutory deadlines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to publish revised register on time Clear audit trail of Canvass activities, inc. evidence of a project management approach and structured risk management process Failure to process application forms within statutory deadline False Registration Multiple occupancy checks 	<p>Regular meeting to check on progress</p> <p>Canvass processes and risk planner revised regularly</p> <p>Quality checks undertaken for all canvassers</p> <p>Daily checks on number of forms to process</p> <p>Verification checks carried out on all forms received after rolling registration deadline</p> <p>Personal visits to all properties with more than 6 electors resident – 2 weeks before election date</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>LS</p> <p>LS</p> <p>LS/JP</p> <p>LS/JP</p> <p>LS</p>
<p>3. Postal Votes: Issue and Receipt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to issue postal votes as stated False statement on application for postal or proxy vote 	<p>Regular meeting with print company to check on progress</p> <p>Quality checks undertaken on all application forms received</p>	<p>LS/JP</p> <p>LS</p>

Risk	Contingency/ action	Action taken/ comments	Responsible officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal votes not delivered • Agents handling postal vote packs • Postal votes sent to away addresses • Personal Identifier verification 	<p>Postal vote packs delivered by Royal mail – recorded delivery</p> <p>Candidates and Agents signed up to local protocol – breach reported to Police</p> <p>Daily checks on forms redirecting postal vote to away address</p> <p>100% checks carried on personal identifiers at opening session</p>	<p>LS</p> <p>LS</p> <p>LS</p> <p>LS/JP</p>
<p>4. Polling Station: Corrupt Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elector not registered – unable to vote • Multiple Voting • Postal votes not delivered • Distribution of regular up-to-date alteration and postal vote lists 	<p>Final election register printed after deadline – clerical errors checked and electors eligible to vote</p> <p>All staff trained regarding personation – Use of Niqab, wearing rings, nail varnish, shoes</p> <p>Quality checks undertaken</p> <p>Postal vote packs delivered by Royal mail recorded delivery</p> <p>Weekly/fortnightly list for all candidates</p>	<p>LS/JP</p> <p>LS/JP</p> <p>LS</p> <p>LS</p>

3. ELECTORAL SERVICES 2014

3.1 The following shows the 2014 timetable of events for Electoral Services –

Project Description	Start Date	End Date
Annual Canvass 2013/2014	01 October 2013	17 February 2014
Confirmation Letters 2014	07 March 2014	10 March 2014
Rolling Registration 2014	17 February 2014	09 June 2014
Combined elections	14 April 2014	22 May 2014
Individual Electoral Registration	10 June 2014	ongoing
LGBCE - new wards and polling districts	26 June 2013	April 2014

4. ANNUAL CANVASS 2013/14

- 4.1 The Electoral Registration Officer has a duty to conduct an audit of all properties in the borough to ensure the Register of Electors is as complete and accurate as possible.
- 4.2 Stage one of the canvass commenced on 1 October 2013 and ran until 9 December 2013. During this period, we employed over 160 canvassers to visit properties in their area to update the information currently held on the Register. For those properties where they were unable to gain a response, the voter registration form was posted through the door with a leaflet explaining the process.
- 4.3 We currently have an 80%+ return from the initial stage of the canvass, with 37% of those properties confirming changes to the current information.
- 4.4 Stage two commenced on 6 January 2014 and will run up to 16 February 2014. During this period, all properties that have not responded will receive a 'reminder' voter registration form to complete and return.
- 4.5 All 'hard to access' blocks will receive personal visits from our most experienced canvassers to ensure we get a better return from these properties. We are aiming for a 90%+ response at the end of the canvass. We will employ a team of people to knock at every property where there are more than 6 electors registered. This will ensure the 2014 Register is up-to-date before publication.

4.6 The following table shows the canvass percentage returns for the past 5 years.

REGISTER	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Electorate @ 1 December	156,712	160,278	169,181 (10/1/2011)	172,092	161,663
Properties @ 1 December	103,944	108,690	111,310	113,591	116,120
Canvass Form Return	86.84%	81.76%	84.40%	86.36%	85.22%

5. CONFIRMATION LETTERS 2014

- 5.1 Following the annual canvass and publication of the revised Register of Electors 2014, confirmation letters will be sent to every household in the borough.
- 5.2 Canvassers will distribute the confirmation letters over the weekend of 8/9 March 2014. The letter will inform residents of the current information held on the revised Register of Electors 2014, provide information about the forthcoming elections with statutory deadlines for registering and give a brief introduction to Individual Electoral Registration.

6. ROLLING REGISTRATION 2013 AND 2014

- 6.1 Rolling registration commences on 17 February 2014 where we will add, amend or remove details from the Register on a monthly basis. Due to the delayed canvass in 2013, the rolling register 2013 closed later than normal on 1 November 2013. The final electorate figure was 169,794 with 119,583 properties on the database.
- 6.2 The following table shows the number of additions, deletions and amendments received during the 2013 rolling registration period.

MONTH	ADDITIONS	DELETIONS	AMENDMENTS	TOTAL	ELECTORATE
3rd December					161,663
2nd January	134	57	25	216	161,741
1st February	4,527	597	316	5,440	165,677

1st March	1,514	359	223	2,096	166,832
2nd April	1,037	516	208	1,761	167,353
1st May	945	475	157	1,577	167,823
3rd June	1,038	584	161	1,783	168,277
1st July	1,326	1,045	271	2,642	168,558
1st August	1,587	891	212	2,690	169,254
2nd September	1,087	1,006	176	2,269	169,335
1st October	1,065	875	122	2,062	169,525
1st November	1,316	1,047	218	2,581	169,794
YEARLY TOTALS	15,576	7,452	2,089	20,474	

7. INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

- 7.1 The Government has confirmed its intention to move to Individual Electoral Registration on 10 June 2014 in England and Wales.
- 7.2 The announcement, which follows the recent consideration of statutory instruments by both Houses of Parliament, came in a Written Ministerial Statement from Greg Clark, Minister for Cities and the Constitution.
- 7.3 This means that from that date, people will no longer apply to register to vote as a household. Instead, everyone will apply as an individual, providing evidence of their identity such as a National Insurance Number and date of birth.

8. NEW WARDS AND POLLING DISTRICTS

- 8.1 A review of polling districts has been conducted following implementation of the recent electoral review of the borough by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which proposed changes to the council size and ward boundaries for local government elections.
- 8.2 From 2014, 45 councillors will represent two single-member wards, eleven two-member wards and seven three-member wards across the borough.
- 8.3 The final recommendations of the review were agreed by the General Purposes Committee on 18th December 2013. These will determine the

polling districts and polling places to be used within each of the 20 new wards.
The new ward and polling district structure will take effect for the next Local
Government elections to be held on 22 May 2014.

John Williams
Returning Officer and Electoral
Registration Officer

Louise Stamp
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6th January 2014