

	<b>General Functions Committee</b>  <b>28 June 2017</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Acting Returning Officer's (ARO's) Preliminary Report on the General Election held on 8 June 2017</b>
<b>Report of</b>	John Hooton - Chief Executive and (Acting) Returning Officer
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	Yes
<b>Key</b>	No
<b>Enclosures</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> - ARO's Preliminary Report of the Election Review on the UK Parliamentary Election on 8 June 2017
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## Summary

This report provides committee with a preliminary report on the planning, implementation and delivery of the UK General Election on 8 June 2017 in the three parliamentary constituencies within the London Borough of Barnet. A full report on the election review findings will follow and is proposed to publish in time for the committee's meeting on 9 October 2017.

## Recommendations

1. That the General Functions Committee note and comment upon the preliminary findings of the ARO in the report set out in Appendix A.
2. The General Functions Committee note that a full (more detailed) report will be presented at the committee's meeting on 9 October 2017 – and that such a report will form part of an annual process of elections review.

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 So that the General Functions Committee has oversight of the delivery of statutory elections within the borough and of the resources (including staff, accommodation, equipment and services) made available by the Council to the London Borough of Barnet's (Acting) Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.
- 1.2 The 'Smith Review' of Electoral Registration and Election Services (GFC November '16) commended Barnet's current practice of undertaking post-election reviews and in keeping with the theme of the recommendations made in that report, the ARO committed to bringing these post-election reviews to General Functions Committee.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The designation of the temporary polling places seeks to ensure that electors are given reasonable and accessible facilities for voting (so far as is practicable within the circumstances)
- 2.2 The Council must provide the authority's Returning Officer (who has full and overall responsibility for the preparation and conduct of all elections within the borough) with appropriate resources to ensure the efficient and legislatively compliant conduct of all statutory elections. This report helps to provide General Functions Committee with relevant information to;
  - ensure that the Council has met its obligations in this regard
  - ask any necessary questions to satisfy themselves that provision for future elections will be sufficient and appropriate.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 None.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 A full review of the delivery of the UK Parliamentary elections will be completed and is expected to be published in time for inclusion as an item at the General Functions Committee meeting on 9 October 2017.
- 4.2 The Returning Officer, (Interim) Assurance Director and Head of Electoral Services will re-commence the planning and implementation of all actions appropriate to fulfil the recommendations of the Smith Review.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 It is a Corporate Priority to ensure fairness in decision making. In line with this, it is essential that electoral processes are robust and fair to all in Barnet and the use of post-election reviews has been commended as a way of ensuring that future improvements to the conduct of elections are identified and introduced where possible.

### **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.2.1 In accordance with electoral legislation specific to each electoral franchise, the majority of costs for most borough-wide elections are met by other relevant governmental agencies (e.g. Parliamentary election costs are met by

parliament, London Mayoral/GLA election costs are met by the GLA etc.). The costs of Council (local) elections however are met in full by the council and any increases in the cost of conducting any election activities will have to be met by the council (whether for full Council elections, such as those scheduled for May 2018, or for single vacancy 'by elections').

### **5.3 Social Value**

#### **5.3.1 Not applicable.**

### **5.4 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 Each London Borough is required by Section 35(3) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 Act to appoint an officer of the council (the proper officer of the council) to be the Returning Officer (RO) for elections of borough councillors. Section 8(2)(a) of the Act also requires the Council to appoint an officer to be the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). The ERO is responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral register for any parliamentary constituency or part of a constituency within its area.

5.4.2 According to Section 28(1)(a) of the Act, only the ERO may act as the (Acting) Returning Officer at Parliamentary elections for constituencies in London, the Returning Officer for these elections being the Council's Mayor. It is common practice throughout therefore, that a single officer is appointed as both the RO and ERO.

5.4.3 The Council Constitution, Responsibility for Functions (Annex A) sets out the terms of reference of the General Functions Committee, which include responsibility for "Elections in general".

### **5.5 Risk Management**

5.5.1 The purpose of the election review (of which the attached is a preliminary report) is to assess the most recent performance and suitability of Barnet's election preparations, planning and delivery. Further to that it is designed to identify where improvements can be made to reduce the risk of poor performance or outcomes at future elections so the actions proposed by the full review report will be specifically targeted at identifying and minimising risks at future elections.

### **5.6 Equalities and Diversity**

5.6.1 No separate equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as the delivery of all electoral processes are strictly governed by legislation, which is in itself designed to provide for reasonable access to voting for all electors – including persons who have different forms of disability (so far as is reasonably practicable in the circumstances). In addition to providing polling stations that are as accessible as practicable in the circumstances, section 2 Representation of People Act 2000 provides that all voters have the right to request the use of postal or proxy voting arrangements.

### **5.7 Consultation and Engagement**

5.7.1 The full review of the election will include feedback from individuals and/or groups that will represent all stakeholders in the statutory electoral process.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1 'Independent Review of the Electoral Registration and Elections Services in Barnet and the council's Response' – General Functions Committee 9 November 2016.**