

	<h2>General Functions Committee</h2> <h3>9 October 2017</h3>
Title	Review of the General Election (8 June 2017) and Update on Agreed Actions as per the ‘Smith Review’ of Electoral Registration and Election Services
Report of	John Hooton - Chief Executive and (Acting) Returning Officer
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	Yes
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A – ARO’s Final Report of the Election Review on the UK Parliamentary Election on 8 June 2017
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<h2>Summary</h2>
<p>This report provides committee with a final full review of 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.</p> <p>The report further provides an update on the progress of agreed actions as per the ‘Smith Review’ of Electoral Registration and Election Services in November 2016.</p>

<h2>Recommendations</h2>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the General Functions Committee note and comment upon the review and recommendations of the General Election held on 8 June 2017. 2. That the General Functions Committee note and comment upon the progress of agreed actions as per the ‘Smith Review’ of Electoral Registration and Election Services in November 2016.

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 (reported to the General Functions Committee (GFC) on 9 November 2016) 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 the 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 Officer¹ (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 (also see ref 5.4 for full explanation of the Returning Officer and the Returning Officer role). 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.

¹ At a UK Parliamentary election in a 'borough constituency' in England and Wales, the role of Returning Officer (RO) is a ceremonial and politically neutral position. As per electoral legislation (RPA1983, Part 1, Section 28), the statutory duties of the 'RO' are discharged by the (Acting) Returning Officer who is the 'proper officer of the council' that already holds the role of Electoral Registration officer (so normally a senior officer of the local authority). In the London Borough of Barnet therefore, the mayor is the Returning Officer (RO) and the Chief Executive is the Acting Returning Officer (ARO).

The duties that the Mayor may perform as the RO are:

- Receiving the Writ (the paper that officially calls for the election to be held)
- Declaring and giving public notice of the result (in accordance with the result of the election count).

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Returning Officer, Assurance Director and Head of Electoral Services will commence the planning and implementation of the recommendations included in this report and 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 At a UK Parliamentary election in a 'borough constituency' in England and Wales, the role of Returning Officer (RO) is a ceremonial and politically neutral position.
- 5.4.3 As per electoral legislation (RPA1983, Part 1, Section 28), the statutory duties of the 'RO' are discharged by the (Acting) Returning Officer who is the 'proper

officer of the council' that already holds the role of Electoral Registration officer (so normally a senior officer of the local authority).

5.4.4 In the London Borough of Barnet therefore, the mayor is the Returning Officer (RO) and the Chief Executive is the Acting Returning Officer (ARO).

5.4.5 The duties that the Mayor may perform as the RO are:

- Receiving the Writ (the paper that officially calls for the election to be held)
- Declaring and giving public notice of the result (in accordance with the result of the election count).

5.4.6 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 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 This full review of the election includes reference to 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:

<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=8778&Ver=4>