UK Parliamentary General Election – 8 June 2017
In the Parliamentary constituencies of:

- Chipping Barnet
- Finchley and Golders Green
- Hendon

Contents

1.   Introduction

On the 18 April 2017, the Prime Minister unexpectedly announced that a UK Parliamentary election (General Election) would be held on 8 June 2017. Not surprisingly, the calling of a snap General Election posed significant logistical challenges for election teams and Returning Officers[1] across the country giving just 7 weeks to prepare.

This internal review of the process concludes that the Electoral Services Team responded well to this challenge and that the process for the administration of the General Election ran smoothly across all three Parliamentary constituencies. The level of turnout (both in-station and postal voting) across the constituencies indicates that voter engagement and participation was at a highest ever level which, coupled with the short timeframe for preparation, made the successful delivery of the election even more challenging.

The aim of this report is to:
- Review the overall performance of the project that was undertaken to deliver the UK Parliamentary elections in the three Parliamentary constituencies within the London Borough of Barnet including:
    - The planning and preparations that were undertaken for the elections
    - Electoral Registration processes for electors to apply to vote or change voting arrangements
    - The postal voting processes (and other absent voter arrangements)
    - The effectiveness of the methods used to manage and work with partners and suppliers (e.g. Democracy Counts Ltd (Elector8), Customer Service Group (CSG), Electoral Reform Services (Print and Post) and Allianz Park)
    - The operation of polling stations (venues, staff, processes etc.)
    - Postal vote verification opening and verification processes
    - The counting of votes and the declaration of results
- Identify the key lessons learnt and make recommendations to benefit future election projects.
- Highlight any actions that must, or are advised, be undertaken before the next borough-wide election is held in the London Borough of Barnet.

2.   Review Methodology

The Democratic Engagement Project Manager conducted the Election review following the General Election in June 2017. In order to develop this review and to propose its conclusions, a number of sources of information and feedback have been utilised including:
- The Electoral Commission's 'Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election on 8 June 2017' (parts A - F)
- The Electoral Commissions 'Report on the UK Parliamentary general election held on 8 June 2017'
- CPA UK Election Assessment Mission United kingdom General Election 2017 - Final Report
- The feedback from the London Borough of Barnet's Elections Project Group

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[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).

- Feedback from face to face meetings with the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) and his Deputy Acting Returning Officers (DAROs)
- Responses received to the online election staff feedback survey that was sent to all staff that worked on the elections across a wide-range of roles and duties
- Responses to the online survey that was sent to the Election Agents of all candidates that stood for Parliament in the constituencies within the London Borough of Barnet
- A review of all retained written and email contacts, queries and complaints that were received from residents, electors and other stakeholders both during and after the election period.

3.   The UK Parliamentary General Election 2017 Project Objectives

The core objectives of any borough-wide election project are similar, and to a large extent are set down by electoral legislation or under guidance from the Electoral Commission.

For the purposes of this review, the following objectives were considered against all assessments of performance or proposed future activities and advice:

a)   The elections are to be run in accordance with all relevant legislation and will take heed of all appropriate Electoral Commission guidance

b)   All eligible electors should be able to vote and in the manner[2] in which they choose

c)   All statutory and necessary electoral processes must be conducted in a consistent, professional and transparent manner

d)   The results of the election must be accurate and should be accepted with confidence by all relevant stakeholders.

Objectives of delivering the UK Parliamentary General Election 2017 Project:
The following objectives will be used to assess the performance of the project in terms of local best practice and efficiency:

- Run the elections utilising an effective project management approach, ensuring that all necessary stakeholders within the organisation are effectively communicated with and have confidence in the progress of the projects activities
- Carefully manage the costs of conducting the elections so as to ensure good value for money is achieved and that there is no unnecessary or excessive expenditure of public finances
- Manage the resources made available to the Acting Returning Officer through the Council's commissioning structure to effectively demonstrate the capability and potential scope of partnership working to deliver elections.

4.   Project Resources and Methodology

The Elections Project Team was quickly set up and managed by the Head of Electoral Services. The project was conducted utilising an approach which, whilst broadly based upon standard project management controls, also incorporated the experience of key project team members and good practice learned from previous election projects.

4.1. Project Planning

A project plan was swiftly developed to outline key activities with set timescales and milestones to ensure the delivery of a successful election.

Key to the delivery of the project and the communication of the progress it was making were the regular project group meetings. These meetings were chaired by the Acting Returning Officer and held weekly from the day the election was called on the 18 April 2017. Key senior stakeholders were present at all

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[2] *Whilst complying with the specific rules applying to those electors that are not 'confirmed' under Individual Electoral Registration (IER).*

meetings, including Deputy Acting Returning Officers (DAROs), Head of Electoral Services, Elections Project Manager, Monitoring Officer, representatives from Communications Team, Customer Services Group and the Head of IT. This ensured that all key stakeholders were aware of progress, could contribute suggestions based on previous experience and offer solutions to any problems that arose.

In addition the Head of Electoral Services also held a number of ongoing and ad-hoc meetings with the various members of the project team to discuss and plan specific preparation activities, review and develop certain critical election processes (e.g. the return of ballot boxes to the count venue), assess and procure required resources and to investigate any particular element of the project for which it was considered necessary.

All key election staff (including Presiding Officers, Count Table Supervisors, Polling Inspectors etc.) were trained and briefed by the Head of Electoral Services in preparation for the election.

4.2. Staffing

The Electoral Services team was supplemented with an additional five members of full-time staff, who were seconded-in from across the Assurance Delivery Unit (4) and Adult and Communities (1). Utilising staff from within the council who had prior knowledge and core transferable skills was essential to enable robust delivery and resilience across all election project deliverables within such a short time.

The full complement of staff was then split between a 'Registration Team' and an 'Elections Project Team' although a high degree of flexibility in temporarily moving staff members between these teams as required (e.g. to meet specific statutory deadlines etc.) was necessary in order to make best use of these available resources.

The following table outlines the key project individuals and their key responsibilities for the election:

Individual	Project Role	Summary of Key Responsibilities
John Hooton	Acting Returning Officer (ARO)[3]	To ensure that the election is administered effectively and that the objectives of the elections project are met.
Clair Green	Deputy Acting Returning Officer	To deputise for the ARO and to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to the project as required. Also Line Management of Head of Electoral Services.
Stephen Evans, Cath Shaw, Anisa Darr, Mathew Kendall, Caroline Glitre	Deputy Acting Returning Office(s) (DARO) - Polling and Count	To deputise for the ARO.
David Tatlow	Monitoring Officer	Chief Legal Advisor
John Bailey	Head of Electoral Services / Deputy Acting Returning Officer	All project management duties, budgetary control and overall management for all electoral processes, staff and venues.
Ken Argent	Postal Vote Verification Manager	Planning and management of Postal Vote sessions. Recruitment and supervision of all postal vote opening and verification staff.
Dave Rowe	Count Deputy Acting Returning Officer	Provide additional preparation and planning for all Count processes. DAROs adjudication and processes. Project quality assurance.

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- Receiving the Writ (the paper that officially calls for the election to be held)
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Fiona Ahern	Electoral Registration Manager (ERM)	All Electoral Registration duties, management and application of elections software (including statutory notices etc.). Project resources and quality assurance.
Emily Bowler	Elections Project Manager	Provide additional project management support to the Elections Project including quality assurance, and management and co-ordination of all communications.
Robert Dunsford	Logistics and Security Manager	Facilities and transport management for all polling and count venues. Recruitment and supervision of all security and marshalling staff.
Sue Cocker / Gareth Green	Communications	Internal and external communications, media and PR management.
Brian Webb / Kirit Patel	Election project IT support	Planning, management and support of all project IT requirements and systems.
Natasha Patterson / Andy Ralphs	Customer Services Group (CSG)	Customer services relationship management and support.

In addition, partners in the Customer Services Group were tasked with providing essential support through the implementation of a dedicated Elections Call Centre to ensure that all 'first tier' enquiries from electors, residents and other stakeholders (for example, straightforward and basic enquiries) were suitably responded to. They also added supplementary support to manage the email box for the Electoral Registration Office.

Recruitment started immediately for staff that would be required for polling, counting and other electoral duties. In addition to contacting staff that had worked on recent elections, a relatively low-key campaign seeking applications from current staff from the London Borough of Barnet and partner organisations was highly successful and recruitment to over 700 posts was well managed throughout.

A key element to ensuring staffing levels were sufficient throughout was to 'over-recruit' to key polling and count roles and this successfully compensated for the inevitable late staff withdrawals and the handful of no-shows on the day.

5.   Summary of the Project's Performance

The preparations in Barnet involved confirmation of nearly 100 polling venues (including in a few instances where pre-designated venues had to be replaced at very late notice), the count venue, and the co-ordination of multiple statutory processes that involved over 700 staff across polling stations, security and logistics, postal voting and finally, the count and declarations.

It also involved standing up additional resources to manage the typical surge in registration around national elections, as well as the preparation and issuing of polling cards, postal votes, proxy votes and so on. Further to this, the requirements of staff recruitment and training and the preparation of materials and equipment for ballot boxes, polling stations and the count were all successfully delivered in just 7 weeks.

During the election period, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK (CPA UK) organised an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) of the UK General Election across eight constituencies from 3-10 June 2017. The CPA selected Hendon as one of the constituencies to be observed. The Mission was attended by parliamentarians and election officials from 23 jurisdictions across the Commonwealth. During the intensive six day programme in Hendon, members of the CPA EAM met with the Acting Returning Officer, visited Polling Stations and observed the Postal Verification at Hendon Town hall and the Election count at Allianz Park. Further information on the CPA and their report can be found here - www.uk-cpa.org/events-projects/election-assessment-mission-uk-general-election/. The observers found the meetings with Hendon election stakeholders useful and informative and many felt that the Mission had been successful in developing their understanding of how elections are run. The CPA team were very complimentary on how well the Election Count was run in Barnet.

5.1. Key headlines

- In the run up to the General Election, there were over 12,000 additions to the register
- Current register stands at its highest level in Barnet at 253,591 (includes electors without Parliamentary franchise).
- In Barnet, 226,535 people were eligible to vote in the June 2017 General Election of which 48, 828 chose to vote by post.
- At 70.7%, overall turnout across Barnet was 2% higher than that nationally (68.7%). This was comparable to the overall London turnout of 70.3%
- On polling day, 120,800 electors cast their votes across Barnet's 155 polling stations at 93 locations, giving an in-person turnout of 67.8%.
- Postal voter turnout was at 81.6% which is especially significant given that Barnet has the largest number of postal voters in London.
- These figures make it clear that the vast majority of electors were able to cast their vote in the way that they chose and gives good assurance that there were no wide-spread issues that stopped eligible electors from either getting registered or casting their votes.
- The Election Count held at Allianz Park ran extremely smoothly, with all constituencies completing their initial counts before 4am.
- As a consequence of the very close results in Hendon and Chipping Barnet, Election Agent's requested that 'bundle-flick' rechecks of vote bundles be carried out were agreed by the ARO. This resulted in the declarations for these two constituencies not being made until 5.15am and 5.40am respectively.
- An online survey was sent all staff involved in administering all aspects of the elections, and the 254 responses were received were highly positive. To illustrate this, some key responses received were:
    - 96.8% of respondents want to work on future elections in Barnet
    - 95% considered all processes they had to follow to be efficient
    - 92.4% felt that the right number of staff were available for the processes
    - 93.2% stated that a good level of service was given to electors and candidates
- An online survey was sent to all candidates' Election Agents with a 61% response rate. Overall, respondents gave positive feedback.
    - 87.5% found the process of submitting candidates forms accessible or very accessible
    - 100% found the Acting Returning Officer's Agents Briefing event useful or very useful
    - 87.5% felt that Allianz Park was a very suitable Election Count venue
    - 87.5% felt that the Election Count processes were clear and transparent
    - 100% felt that the election count was well managed.

6.   Pre-election preparations

As previously stated, the General Election on the 8 June was called on the 18 April. Where appropriate, work that was already in progress in response to the Smith Review Recommendations was fully utilised in planning for this election.

6.1. Smith Review Recommendations

6.1.1. The external and independent 'Review of Barnet's Electoral Registration and Elections Services' was conducted by Dr Dave Smith (former Returning Officer for Sunderland City Council) following the final recommendation from the Heath Investigation which was that Barnet's Returning Officer should "…initiate a review of the way in which elections are delivered and how the electoral services function operates with a view to producing suitable recommendations on resources, future management, support arrangements, operating practices, compliance issues and responsibility/accountability for the electoral services function."

6.1.2. The Smith Review was completed in October 2016 and outlined a number of recommendations[4]. A number of these recommendations have already been progressed. However, given the timing of the Snap General Election, not all recommendations have been completed as originally planned. The table in Appendix 1 outlines the full list of recommendations, progress to date and timescales for implementation.

6.2. Polling Districts and Polling Places

6.2.1. The Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places[5] is taken annually to General Functions Committee and allows the committee to decide upon arrangements for polling places and polling districts in London Borough of Barnet.

6.2.2. The report from March 2017 included proposals to change five (GFC agreed on 3 changes) of the current polling places to be used at all relevant future elections and referendums that take place within the borough.

6.2.3. Of the 93 Polling Places to accommodate the 155 Polling Stations for the General Election, only 3 were unable to be used at such short notices for various reasons (for example, planned library refurbishment) and alternative venues were secured within the tight timescale.

6.2.4. Portable cabins are used as polling venues where designated. Given the short notice of the election, a further portable cabin was hired on 'standby' to mitigate the non availability of any other polling venue. This proved invaluable when a permanent venue was withdrawn at very short notice due to the building being condemned because of multiple electrical faults. For future elections, we will hire a stand-by portable cabin in case there is a repeat of a similar event.

6.2.5. Barnet used 33 schools as polling venues (more than a third of all polling places), of which 30 are primary schools. Of these, 27 schools decided to close to pupils on polling day. We worked closely with head teachers during the run up to the General Elections and schools continue to be accommodating. However, head teachers continue to be concerned about disruption to education and to parents being unable to work due to having to provide childcare on polling day if the school is closed – especially at short notice.

6.2.6. At the time of the election, the UK's terror threat was at a 'Severe'[6] following terror attacks in both London and Manchester. There was wide perception that the Parliamentary Elections would be a target for a further attack. Although there was no specific intelligence about any planned attack in Barnet, additional security and police patrols was put in place. However, a number of schools took the decision to either increase their own security or close the school to pupils and staff. In addition, all elections staff were issued with Home Office guidance to be extra vigilant, and to report any suspicious activity to the police.

6.2.7. The next Annual Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places will take place in this autumn and report to GFC upon its conclusion. This review will be more wide ranging and address any issues that arose from the June Election.

6.3. Implementation of new Electoral Administration System

6.3.1. As the previous contract for the Electoral Administration System had expired, the Electoral Services had conducted a procurement exercise to commission a new Electoral Administration Management System (EMS) to be implemented in early 2017. At the time of procurement and the decision to 'go-live', no elections were planned scheduled until May 2018 which would have given over a year for appropriate staff to have been fully trained on using the system to deliver an election.

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[4] See GFC November 2016, Item 7 http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=8778&Ver=4
[5] See GFC March 2017, Item 7 http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=8781&Ver=4
[6] M15 terror level of 'severe' means an attack is highly likely.

6.3.2. The new EMS system Elector 8 provided by Democracy Counts Ltd went live on 3 April 2017. In preparation, training on the new system for the Electoral Registration staff took place on 27-29 March 2017 with floor workers from Democracy Counts available 3 and 4 April.

6.3.3. Staff had been using the system for electoral registration activities for just 2 weeks before the election was called giving very little for staff to familiarise themselves with new software. This meant that the pressure brought by the inevitable increase in registration activity was even more keenly felt within the team.

6.3.4. To ensure there was adequate resourcing and support, two skilled Assurance staff were seconded into the Registration Team. In addition, to mitigate against any issues with the new system during the run up to the election, the Election Team worked in close collaboration with the supplier throughout.

6.3.5. The new system was successfully used to support the complete elections process, including in the peak period of registration, through read access only for the CSG Election Call Centre and to manage and recruit all election staff.

6.3.6. The level of support from the council IT team was also significantly increase given the priority of the project.

6.4. Public Awareness Campaign

6.4.1. The Electoral Commission ran a national public awareness campaign which aimed to increase people's awareness of the election and how to take part, including the need to vote by 22 May 2017. The campaign aimed to maximise the limited time available and had four strands:
- Using advertising with a tried-and-tested record of success
- Securing high-profile social media partnerships with Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Nextdoor
- Generating media coverage around key milestones
- Supporting partner organisations - including UK and local government, charities and NGOs - by co-ordinating activities and providing resources for them to use on their own channels

The aim was to reach both a general audience and under-registered groups, including students, home movers, 18-34 year olds, private renters, UK citizens living overseas and armed forces personnel. The channels used across Great Britain included TV, radio, social media and Google search advertising. The Electoral Commission reported that the campaign exceeded their additions target by 162% with approximately 856,000 people added to the register between 8 and 22 May.

The Electoral Commission have recommended that Government improves the online system so that people can learn if they are already registered to vote and therefore don't apply again. However, until improvements are made they will continue to do ensure that their campaigns and communications channels help people understand when they actually need to register and when they don't to reduce duplications of registrations.

6.4.2. Barnet also joined the Pan-London Election Campaign – 'London Calling'. Lambeth Communications team were commissioned to deliver a one-week campaign on behalf of participating boroughs to encourage people to register to vote in time for the General Election on June 8. The campaign was live between 16 and 22 May (the deadline for registering). The target audience was people aged between 18 and 30 who live in rented accommodation, and who tend to be apathetic towards voting and transient. Due to the time available and audience being targeted, the instruction was to deliver a mainly digital campaign that would benefit all participating boroughs. The Pan-London campaign reported that 1.6 million 18-34 year old Londoners saw the campaign and 20,696 people clicked to register to vote (179% vs projection). The projection was 11,576.

6.4.3. In addition, Barnet Council ran a local campaign led by the Central Communications Team through a range of methods, including:
- JCDecaux Street posters
- Refreshed web pages
- social media (Facebook and twitter posts)
- press releases.

6.4.4. The Central Communications Team, liasing with the Project Manager and Electoral Registration Manager, responded to social media posts from Facebook and Twitter. Although well co-ordinated with prompt responds, theses enquiries were disproportionally prioritised above other methods of contact. In preparation for the upcoming election in May 2018, a strategy for dealing with social media enquiries will be developed to manage tweets and Facebook posts.

6.5. Access for people with disabilities

6.5.1. We aim to ensure that voters with disabilities in Barnet have choice and equal access to the democratic process, whether and however they choose to participate. It is an important human right that citizens can exercise their democratic right to vote and the Elections Team work hard to provide equal access to prospective voters with a range of disabilities to ensure that they are aware of the options available to them to register and to vote (in person, with support, by postal vote or by proxy).

6.5.2. Approximately 12% of Barnet voters identified as having a broad range of disabilities (sensory, learning, mental health and physical disability) and an ageing population, this is a responsibility we take very seriously. Our aim is to promote choice and independence so that disabled voters are encouraged to register to vote and can make the right choice for their particular circumstances in how they cast a vote.

6.5.3. This year, we have widely circulated the Mencap and Electoral Commissions 'Easy Read Guides to voting in the General Election' resources to support people with a learning disability in the lead up to the General Election. In addition, we refreshed our web content for the Elections to make it easier for all residents to find out more about the elections processes.

6.5.4. The elections team address disability awareness in training for polling station staff to promote a better understanding of disability and improved customer service for people with disabilities. We advise our Presiding Officers (POs) to be disability aware to ensure that where a voter appears on the electoral register, the POs know to offer help and support to disabled voters and to act according to the person's wishes. For example, no help required, support to cast a vote, allowing the companion of a disabled voter to assist, including taking a ballot paper out of the station to an elector if requested to do so.

6.5.5. In preparation for the General Election 2017, every polling station took account of wheelchair access requirements which also make it easier for parents/carers to vote with small children in prams and pushchairs. All polling station staff are trained in the use of a tactile voting device to support voters with visual impairments, which is displayed at every polling station to improve the independence and secrecy of the voting process for people with impaired vision. The availability of a loop system to support users of hearing aids is also fully communicated at stations where this is available. Where the polling station is a portable office we provide ramps which we recognise can pose a challenge for disabled electors and advise Presiding officers to see that the best possible access arrangements are in place at all locations. In addition each station is inspected during the course of polling day and the Polling Station Inspectors' checklists review this as a part of their visits.

6.5.6. We will continue to review our polling premises with particular reference to the accessibility of the polling station.

6.6. Election Call centre

6.6.1. As in previous years, arrangements were made with Customer Services Group (CSG) for the provision of a dedicated 'Elections Call Centre' to take and answer all first level telephone and email contacts (straightforward and basic enquires) from the Electoral Registration Team.

6.6.2. The Electoral Registration Manager provided on-site staff training at CSG's Coventry offices visited to provide all the Elections Call Centre staff. This training also introduced them to the new Electoral Management System, Elector8.

6.6.3. Based on learning from previous elections, all calls were answered directly by call centre agents without the use of automated phone menus (or IVR). This allowed the call centre agent to deal with the customer enquiry more efficiently.

6.6.4. The Elections Call Centre went live from the Coventry office from 2 May until 9 June. During this period of the 12,425 calls offered 11,828 (85%) were answered. The council agreed performance target with CSG is 80% of calls are answered within 60 seconds.

6.6.5. On Election Day, the Election Call Centre was open from 7am-10.30pm and offered 2,544 calls (of which 2,220 calls were answered). The resources that CSG allocated to manage Polling Day enquiries was based on previous election figures.

6.6.6. Polling stations were issues with a supply of Election Call Centre contact cards to issue to residents with queries about registration and voting arrangements. These were highly effective in ensuring that queries were dealt with at the appropriate office.

6.6.7. Due to the high levels of email enquiries coming into the registration team the Elections Call Centre were further commissioned to assist with the management of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) mail box from 4 June. From 4-9 June the Coventry CSG team processed 1,398 'straightforward' emails which released significant pressure on the Barnet Elections Team. Going forward we will review the process for managing the number of email enquiries for future elections in order to improve demand management during peak periods.

6.6.8. The types of enquiries that the call centre received ranged from straightforward queries, including

- Are they or members of their household registered to vote?
- How do they register to vote?
- Are they eligible to vote?
- What information is required to make them eligible to vote?
- Deadline of registration?

To more complex enquiries around why they were unable to vote, for example:

- Their name was recorded on the system but they were unable to vote as they were not verified
- They had applied to register on-line before the deadline and received acknowledgement email but were still required to send verification documents; therefore, the assumption was they were registered.

6.6.9. Support from the Coventry Call Centre was essential to ensure that the election ran smoothly, however, there were a number of technical problems that we experienced in the run up to the election. On 25 May, the call centre were unable to take election phone enquires for a few hours due to technical reasons which meant calls were re-directed to the Electoral Services Team in Barnet had to manage calls and emails during a two hour period.

6.7. Training and briefing sessions

6.7.1. The Head of Electoral Services and the Electoral Services Team ran number of briefing and training sessions, with the ARO present, to prepare staff and key stakeholders for the General Election. This included:

- DARO Count Training (25 May 2017)
- Table Supervisors Count Training (5 June 2017)
- Postal Vote Training (1-7 June)
- Poll Clerk Training (17,19,24, 26,27 May)
- Presiding Officer (13,18,20 May and 6 June)
- Polling Station Inspector briefings (30 May and 5 June)
- Count staff training (8 June - 8.30pm)
- Candidates and Election Agent Briefing Sessions (15 May 2017)

6.7.2. Overall we have received positive feedback back from both staff and key stakeholders on the training session with 78.24% of respondents to the online survey stating that they found training useful to undertake their role and 100% of respondents to the Election Agents online survey found the Acting Returning Officer's Agents Briefing event useful or very useful.

6.7.3. In addition to guidance material issued at all training session, Presiding Officers were also issued with guidance on security for Polling Stations and Counting Offices in light of the terror attacks in London and Manchester in June 2017.

6.7.4. Following on feedback from polling station staff, we will compile fuller guidance documentation so that they have quick access to key information so that frequently asked questions can be dealt with more efficiently at the polling station.

7. Electoral Registration

7.1. Electoral Registration Levels

7.1.1. Despite some initial public opinions that eligible electors might not engage in high levels with this election, activity on the electoral register increased significantly (even beyond the levels witnessed for the EU Referendum last year).

7.1.2. Nationally, an estimated 46.8 million people were registered to vote at the June 2017 UK Parliamentary general election, of which 68.8% actually voted. This was the largest ever electorate for a UK-wide poll, with approximately 500,000 more electors than at the 2015 election.

7.1.3. More than 2.9 million applications to register to vote were made in Great Britain between the Prime Minister's announcement on 18 April and the deadline for applications on 22 May. More than 96% of applications were made using the online service, including 612,000 which were submitted on the last day for applications.

7.1.4. In London alone there were 628,983 (and in Barnet 22,270) online applications to join the register. (See Appendix 2 for the full comparative data for all London authorities).

7.1.5. Between 18 April and 22 May, over two thirds (69%) of online applications were made by people aged under 34.

7.1.6. Within Barnet there were almost 19,000 amendments made to the register of electors during the period following the announcement of the election and the publication of the final election register on 1 June 2017.

7.1.7. This figure included over 12,000 additions to the register so that it currently stands at its highest ever level in Barnet at 253,591 (this includes electors without the Parliamentary franchise). This total register figure was also achieved on the back of the annual register published on 1 December

2016, which itself stood at a post-annual canvass record of 241,737 (and represented an increase of 4.7% over previous year, versus the average London increase of circa 3.6%).

7.2. Registration Process

7.2.1. Whilst registration applications have undoubtedly been simplified and aided by the national 'gov.uk/register-to-vote' online registration portal that was introduced under Individual Electoral Registration (IER), a known side-effect of this application channel across the UK is the significant number of duplicate applications generated that local authorities must manage.

7.2.2. There is no direct link between the online registration service and the electoral registers, which are each held separately on local authorities' databases. This means that the online registration system allows people to submit duplicate applications to register even if they are already registered to vote.

7.2.3. These duplicate applications cause a great deal of unnecessary administrative time and effort. Within the election period, there were 7,611 duplicate registrations in Barnet (i.e. people who made an application to register despite already being held on the register).

7.2.4. As the deadline for registering in time for the election approaches, the high number of late applications made via the gov.uk route subsequently created a high number of contacts in the run up to and on the day of polling, enquiring as to whether their application has been successful (under IER all applications to join the register must be verified against Department of Work and Pensions held data, or otherwise confirmed against additionally supplied documentary evidence).

7.2.5. Currently, an applicant via the gov.uk portal receives an acknowledgement email[7] from the site stating that the application has gone to a specified local authority, but does not explain that the success of the application is still subject to a central government verification process and may also yet require the applicant to provide further documentary evidence (potentially within a very short period of time). In Barnet a further review to explore improvements to existing internal processes to resolve enquiries about DWP verification will be made ahead of future elections.

7.2.6. The Head of Electoral Service and other colleagues (through the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators) have made representations on behalf of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to the Cabinet Office regarding the need to clarify that processes are still outstanding in the acknowledgement emails that are sent to applicants from the gov.uk portal.

7.3. Absent Voting (Postal and Proxy Votes)

7.3.1. There are a number of different elements that must all perform to a high degree of efficiency to ensure that the votes of those electors using the available methods of absent voting are accurately and securely added to the final count whilst guarding against actual and perceived opportunities for electoral fraud.

7.3.2. The number of registered electors in Barnet opting to vote by post continues to increase and 48,828 of those eligible to vote at Parliamentary elections chose this voting method for this election. This represented 21.5% of the eligible electorate and is again a new record number (at the General Election in May 2015 -19.5% of the eligible electorate had a postal vote). A total of 39,849 postal ballot packs were returned by 10pm on polling day, giving a turnout from postal voters of 81.6%. Overall a total of 254 replacement postal vote packs were issued (equating to 0.54% of all postal vote packs) from North London Business Park and Hendon Town Hall for lost, spoilt or non-received postal vote packs.

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[7] Acknowledgement email to applicants says 'We've sent your application to London Borough of Barnet. They'll contact you as soon as possible to confirm you're registered to vote, or to ask for more information. If you have any questions about your application, contact them using the details below.'

7.3.3. An experienced Postal Vote Verification Manager oversaw the postal votes opening and verification processes which took place from 1-8 June at Hendon Town Hall.

7.3.4. 2,200 Postal Votes were returned directly to polling stations on the day and subsequently brought to Allianz Park along with Ballot Boxes for process and verification at Allianz Park (see ref. 9.3.8 below). In addition, two late batches of Postal Votes were delivered from Royal Mail at 10pm to Allianz Park.

7.3.5. The number of registered electors opting to vote by Proxy was 2,228. Of these, emergency proxy voting arrangements were granted to 145 electors. These figures represent one of the highest levels in London (See Appendix 2 for full comparative data for all London authorities).

7.3.6. In many instances, because of the late nature of these applications, these need to be called through to the polling stations on the day of the Election. In a small number of cases voters emergency proxy authorisations had not been received at the polling station when the proxy arrived, meaning that there was short delay to confirm the voting arrangements. For future elections, we will review this process to ensure all Emergency Proxys granted by 5pm on the day before an election are communicated to Presiding Officers ahead of polling day. We will continue to ensure that robust checks to combat potential electoral fraud are adhered to.

8.   Polling Day

8.1.   Polling Stations

8.1.1 On polling day, 120,800 electors cast their votes across Barnet's 155 polling stations at 93 locations, giving an in-person turnout of 67.8%.

8.1.2 The polling stations were managed and delivered by over 500 staff Polling Station staff. The process to recruit staff was delivered in a compressed timescale using the new Elector 8 systems. Due to the pressured timescale, an increased number of 'reserve staff' were recruited than in previous elections to ensure that any staff dropping out could be replaced quickly.

8.1.3 More experienced Presiding Officers were allocated to preside alone at selected polling places that host two polling stations within a single hall. This allowed some additional polling clerks to be made available at no extra cost during later busier voting periods and particularly at a number of other locations where queues were considered possible.

8.1.4 Feedback from polling staff and election agents was overall positive stating that the process ran more smoothly in Barnet than has been the case over recent elections. Specific feedback on individual polling venues will be used to inform preparations for future elections.

8.1.5 Registers were complete at all polling stations, and the overall number of queries and complaints around postal votes and polling cards was lower than has been the case historically.

8.1.6 Unfortunately there were a small number of issues reported with the behaviour of tellers on polling day that Presiding Officers and Polling Inspectors had to resolve. We will review the communication, guidance and Returning Officer instructions given to Election Agents in this area, in order to ensure that such issues are not repeated at future elections.

8.1.7 A range of feedback has been received from various stakeholders regarding signage at numerous individual Polling Stations. A further review of all signage, including reference to local intelligence about how electors approach and access individual polling stations, will be undertaken to include in instructions to Presiding Officers.

8.1.8 Polling Station staff were issued with Election Team Business Cards to inform voters of the correct number to call with Election enquiries. This was well received and will be using again for future elections.

8.1.9 The Acting Deputy Returning Officer and Deputy AROs visited polling stations throughout the day which receive extremely positive feedback from Polling Staff. We will review timings of DAROs visits on polling day to enable a senior officer to visit every Polling station.

9.   Count and declarations

9.1.   Venue

Allianz Park was chosen again to host the Election Count. The layout and the facilities available at the Allianz Park make it an entirely suitable and comfortable venue for the delivery of the count activities on the large scale of borough-wide elections within Barnet.

9.1.1 The Olympic Bar provides an excellent venue for the count given its size and dimensions. The Fez Club was used for Postal Vote Verification. This room was kept secure with access only to Postal Vote staff. The Tulip Club was allocated for candidates and agents as well as press and media. This was also the room used for the declaration of the results.

9.1.2 Security arrangements at Allianz Park were increased given the terror threat level during the Election period. Allianz Park provided additional security on the door with 'bag checks' at the main entrance. Police also provided additional presences both at Allianz Park and across the borough during the day. Following feedback we will review security arrangements on the front desk for Candidates, Elections Agents and Press at the count.

9.1.3 There were several discussions with Allianz Park to give assurance that IT access would be readily available. However, there were issues accessing the Wi-Fi provided by Allianz Park which caused delay for the Communications Team and Elections Team to access Barnet computers. Plans to mitigate against future issues will need to be addressed. Suggestions could include keeping the teams managing social media at the council offices rather than transferring to Allianz Park.

9.2.   Media handling

9.2.1 The Central Communications Team dealt with the media the evening of the count and overall was managed very well with no issues arising.

9.2.2 The Media Accreditation Pack was issued in advance to any press and media who wished to attend the count ensuring that all visitors were well briefed and understood the process. However, for future elections additional investigation to understand the purpose of the journalist attending is important to ensure their attendance is appropriate.

9.2.3 The distinct areas for press and media were allocated in both the count hall and Tulip Bar worked well enabling free access to power sockets and appropriate vantage points for filming and interview opportunities.

9.2.4 Throughout the evening, Communications Team members were assigned to individual journalists to ensure the media were escorted at all times.

9.3.   Count Process

9.3.1   The count process ran extremely smoothly, with all constituencies completing their initial counts just before 4am.

9.3.2   As a consequence the very close results in Hendon and Chipping Barnet in particular meant that Election Agent's requests that 'bundle-flick' rechecks of vote bundles be carried out were agreed by the Acting Returning Officer. A 'bundle flick' is the process whereby ballot papers that have been bundled and allocated to candidates are 'flicked through' whilst being closely observed by agents to ensure that no incorrect allocation of ballot papers has occurred. Whilst this process is

relatively quick, the results in these two constituencies could not be made until 5.15am and 5.40am respectively.

9.3.3   These counts did represent a quicker process than has historically been seen in Barnet, but vitally retained the necessary high levels of transparency and accuracy to ensure confidence in the declared results.

9.3.4   The planning and preparation for the count processes were very detailed and kept under constant review by the ARO, Head of Electoral Service and Count Manager to ensure that they were designed to successfully achieve accurate and wholly accepted results. The Election Assessment Mission from CPA assessed all count centres they observed very positively and noted the professionalism and organisation of the count and counting officers.

9.3.5   Count processes have been enhanced by comparing good practice against other London boroughs. These changes have ensured swift declaration of results and will be reviewed again ahead of the May 2018 local elections.

9.3.6   Following a review of count processes, all counters followed a prescriptive way of verifying and counting votes which was informed by work with other local authorities. This process of counting was used across all tables to ensure the count progressed in a transparent and consistent way.

9.3.7   To ensure there was no downtime when table counts were not progressing, there were additional counting staff recruited to provide cover for breaks and to add additional resource to individual tables as appropriate.

9.3.8   Ballot boxes were returned by Presiding Officers to Allianz Park (as a Parliamentary count must statutorily commence within four hours of the close of poll, during which time the verification of ballot papers must also be completed). The implementation of these processes enabled the receipt of all 155 ballot boxes, including a check on the accompanying paperwork, the ballot paper accounts and a verification of the unused ballot papers to be completed in less than two hours.

9.3.9   2,200 postal votes were returned directly to polling stations on the day. In addition, two late batches of Postal Votes were delivered from Royal Mail at 10pm to Allianz Park. These additional postal votes which were delivered on the day were introduced to the count following the usual verification security checks. As a consequence of the quicker verification of polling station ballot papers at the count table, we will revisit the processes for dealing with postal votes delivered to polling stations on the day as the statutory requirement to security check the postal votes delayed their introduction to the count. This will potential offer a further small improvement to the loss of 'down time' and declaration times at parliamentary counts.

9.3.10 As Barnet has such a high number of postal voters, we will continue to review the resources available and the processes used to verify those postal votes returned to polling stations on elections day.

9.3.11 Count staff were allocated to tables and informed of their table number in advance, which worked well. In addition to Table Supervisors, a new role of Constituency Supervisors was introduced to further ensure good practice and management of resources throughout each constituency count. Feedback from the DAROs was that this system was highly effective.

9.3.12 The new system for staff breaks used at the count received mixed reviews. We will review the approach to breaks for future election counts to ensure all staff are clear on timings to further reduced the amount of count 'down time'.

10.   Recommendations

The next borough-wide election is scheduled to take place in Barnet on 3 May 2018 for the Local Elections. The key lessons learnt from the activities and experiences of this election and recommendations are recorded below and will be revisited when the planning for the next election. These are in addition (and complimentary) to the Smith Review Recommendations (see Appendix 1).

10.1.   Staffing and resources

10.1.1   Ensure the levels of resource (particularly seconded permanent staff) are made available and secured in advance of future elections, utilising where possible, existing staff with prior knowledge of the election processes.

10.2.   Polling Districts and Polling Places

10.1.2   Undertake a robust 'Annual Interim Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places review' in autumn 2017 to ensure all Polling stations are suitable and fit for purpose in advance of the next local election in May 2018.

10.1.3   Review all polling station signage and provide additional instructions to Presiding Officers.

10.1.4   Review timings of DAROs visits on polling day to enable senior officer visits to every Polling station.

10.3.   Communication

10.3.1   Refresh all communication materials to ensure residents have clear information about the registration process, including verification and postal votes, including making representations to the Cabinet Office to updating wording of acknowledgement emails that are sent to applicants from the gov.uk portal.

10.3.2   Continue to ensure voters with disabilities have choice and equal access to the democratic process by ensuring they have access to accessible communication material.

10.3.3   In preparation for the upcoming election in May 2018, develop a strategy for dealing with social media enquiries in the run up to an election ensuring responses are appropriate and proportional.

10.3.4   In collaboration with the Central Communications Team, agree process for managing media and press enquiries including the need for a single point of contact both in the Central Communications Team and Electoral Services Team in the run to an election and on the Polling Day.

10.3.5   Explore methods to manage customer enquiries through the Electoral Registration email inbox, especially during periods of high volume of contacts. For example, consider increasing the ask from CSG Call Centre to manage both phone and email enquiries in weeks preceding the election

10.4.   Registration

10.4.1   Review process and resources to ensure all Emergency Proxys granted by 5pm on the day before an election are communicated to Presiding Officers ahead of polling day.

10.5.   Training and guidance for stakeholders

10.5.1   Though all staff were issues guidance from the Electoral Commissioning to support them in their role, supply staff who are situated or visiting polling stations with fuller guidance including 'frequently asked questions' sheet to help respond to common problems consistently.

10.5.2   Review the communication, guidance and Returning Officer instructions given to Election Agents to ensure that there is clarity on rolls and expected behaviours.

10.5.3 Though all staff were issues guidance from the Electoral Commissioning to support them in their role, we will supply staff who are situated or visiting polling stations with a frequently asked questions sheet to help respond to common problems consistently.

10.6. Venues

10.6.1 There continues to be challenges around accommodating the activities and processes to deliver an election.

10.6.2 In advance of May 2018 elections, early engagement and negotiation with Allianz Park is recommended to ensure logistical arrangements are in place is recommended.

10.6.3 Review arrangements on the front desk to improve upon current security arrangements, including issuing clearer identification of visitors and staff and better 'checking in' processes.

10.7. Count

10.7.1 Review count staff timings, including clear notification of when they are expected to arrive, times of breaks etc.

10.7.2 Further improve and review unnecessary 'down time' taking into possible delays due to postal vote verification and break arrangements for count staff and ensure plans clearly articulated to senior count staff.

10.7.3 Continue to enhance and review count methods ahead of the May 2018 election.

10.7.4 Through training of all count staff at all levels, ensuring consistent count methods and roles are clearly specified. This will be particularly important at the new local election which is a more complex count.

10.7.5 Based on feedback received, further enhance logistical arrangements, for example, contrast of table cloths against ballot papers, use of stamps for spoilt ballet papers, use of number separators, arrangements for swift print outs of key documents, etc.

Appendix 1 - London Borough of Barnet – Review of Registration and Election Services, Smith Review Recommendations – Action Plan

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
A. Establish a set of stretching but achievable objectives including on registration rates, election declaration times, speed and quality of communications	1.1 The Returning Officer and Interim Chief Executive will work closely with the Director of Assurance and the Head of Electoral Services to establish stretching but realistic objectives that meet the criteria set out by Dr Smith in his recommendation and ensure that progress against meeting these objectives are regularly monitored.	We are in the process of developing suitable objectives to measure registration rates across the borough. In February 2017, a report was presented to General Functions Committee (GFC) which reviewed electoral registration rates across the borough and included measurable statistics (for example, electors by property by ward) that will be reviewed and extended to form the basis of future registration objectives. We continually compare our registration rates against national and other London Boroughs to validate the trends and growth we see in Barnet in the context of the London and National levels. For example, at the June 2017 General Election, Barnet's Electoral Register reached a recorded high, which was in line with the Electoral Commission's findings that the 'UK's registration level was at its highest ever'.	December 2017	In progress
		Count processes have been enhanced by sharing and comparing current processes with other London boroughs and developing good practice (e.g. London AEA Count Working Group - see below). Enhancements introduced in June 2017 ensured swift declarations of results at election count whilst maintaining transparency and accuracy. Barnet performed well in comparison to other London boroughs with similar marginal results. As will be necessary, count processes used at a local election will be reviewed ahead of the May 2018 elections and objectives set in agreement with the Returning Officer.	May 2018	In progress
		We reviewed the quality of communications through the online survey. For the General Election, we received positive feedback (100% of respondents found the Agents Briefing event useful or very useful). The objective for measuring quality of communications will continue to be measured through the online survey to election staff and agents.	September 2017	Completed

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
		In addition, we will be setting up a quarterly Democracy Working Group in November 2017 that will enhance communications with key stakeholders (see ref 10.1).		
B. **Research best practice in respect of the objectives chosen and consider how to apply to Barnet.** **C.** **Revise business process plans, project plans and risk assessments in light of new objectives and methods**	2.1 The Head of Electoral Services will be tasked by the Returning Officer and Interim Chief Executive with working closely with the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) to research and document examples of best practice across the services objectives (as set out in accordance with recommendation 1 above) and assess how these examples might be applied to Barnet. 2.2 The Head of Electoral Service will present a planned approach to applying this best practice to Barnet's Electoral Registration and Elections Services objectives and service outputs. 2.3 In addition the Returning Officer, Director of Assurance and Head of Electoral Services will consequently undertake a review of the business process plans, project plans and risk assessments based upon the newly developed objectives and best practice processes adopted.	Through the AEA, Electoral Commission and other relevant organisations, the Head of Electoral Services and colleagues have (and will continue to) attend all available and relevant electoral working groups (including Count Working Group, Elections Accounts working group, Electoral Registration Working Group, Electoral Commission Guidance Review and, the GLA Civic Engagement and Voter Registration workshop) to share and develop good practice across a range of Electoral Service objectives. We also attend the AEA Annual Conference which includes a number of specific workshops on key areas. Research and learning from these activities have been implemented across a range of electoral services (For example, count process - see ref 1.1). Electoral Services is using a structured project management approach to ensure that the identified good practice is implemented and imbedded within Barnet Registration and Elections processes. Project plans and risk assessments are revised on an ongoing basis as part of standard practice for elections and also within Assurance as annual business as usual. In response to the recommendation and the procurement of a new software management system, there is an ongoing activity reviewing the specific processes for the registration (and amendments) of electors. With the help of the Internal Audit team, these new processes will being documented and reviewed – with a view to have them finalised following publication of the annual register of electors on 1 December 2017. These will then be audited over the following twelve months to ensure that robust practices have been created and are retained and appropriately managed.	Ongoing May 2018 January 2018 January 2018	In progress In progress In progress In progress

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
D. Extend the Council's existing formal review processes to include an annual review of registration performance and embed an analysis of achievement against objectives. Continue to report the outcomes of the review to the General Functions Committee for both registration and elections	3.1 The Returning Officer and Interim Chief Executive proposes that an annual report reviewing the performance of the electoral registration functions is brought to the General Functions Committee at its first meeting following publication of the annual 'Revised Register of Electors' on 1 December each year. It is proposed that the first report of this nature will be brought to the Committee's meeting currently scheduled for 16th January 2017.	The first 'Annual Review of Electoral Registration' was presented to GFC in February 2017. A process in now in place for further reviews will be presented to GFC each year following publication of the Annual Register.

A preliminary summary review for the General Election was presented to GFC in on 28 June 2017. The full review will be presented to GFC on 9 October 2017. This review includes a range of recommendations that will be used to inform the May 2018 Local Election.

A full review of the election processes and delivery will continue to be presented to GFC following all future borough-wide elections. | February 2017

October 2017 | Completed

Completed |
| **E. Refresh the approach to the recruitment and retention of temporary staff and reconsider the content of the training to account for the technical and legal requirements of the role and the culture of achievement.** | 4.1 In consultation with the Returning Officer, the Head of Electoral Services will review the approach taken to the recruitment and retention of temporary elections and registration canvassing staff and the training that is given to them.

4.2 Further to this the Head of Electoral Services will develop an appropriate recruitment and retention action plan to be used as required during those periods when it is necessary to recruit temporary elections or registration staff – with a minimum requirement that it is effectively operational in time for the delivery of the Local Elections scheduled for May 2018 (which are currently the next borough-wide elections scheduled to be held in Barnet). | Many significant elements of a refreshed recruitment process were used for all election staff for the General Election in June 2017. The Electoral Services team was supplemented with an additional five members of full-time staff, who were seconded-in from across the Assurance Delivery Unit (4) and Adult and Communities (1). Utilising staff from within the council who had prior knowledge and core transferable skills enabled robust delivery and resilience across all election project deliverables. The full complement of staff was split between a 'Registration Team' and an 'Elections Project Team' although a high degree of flexibility in temporarily moving staff members between these teams was utilised in order to best use of these available resources. In addition this enabled clearer reporting on progress ahead of polling day and the count whilst controlling costs.

In response to the Smith Review recommendations, all training and briefing sessions for the June 2017 Election were refreshed and updated to improve engagement and consistency.

Improved processes are currently being utilised to recruit the | April 2017

May 2017

September | Completed

Completed

Completed |

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
		required canvassing staff who will conduct the statutory personal visits to non-responding households throughout the borough during October and November 2017. The induction and training pack have been revised to reflect technical and legal requirements of the role.	2017	
F. **Further formalise, take account of and report on feedback received from internal and external stakeholders contributing to the election process and consider performance in light of this**	5.1 In consultation with the Returning Officer and Assurance Director, the Head of Electoral Services will develop a standard review timetable, set of performance indicators and a formalised process for the conduct of reviews, which incorporate and take account of the feedback from internal and external stakeholders following any borough-wide election or referendum, with a minimum requirement that it is effectively operational in time for use following the Local Elections scheduled for May 2018.	In addition statutory objectives and Electoral Commission Guidelines, the following objectives will be used to assess the performance of all Election project in terms of local best practice and efficiency: • Run the elections utilising an effective project management approach, ensuring that all necessary stakeholders within the organisation are effectively communicated with and have confidence in the progress of the projects activities • Carefully manage the costs of conducting the elections so as to ensure good value for money is achieved and that there is no unnecessary or excessive expenditure of public finances • Manage the resources made available to the Acting Returning Officer through the Council's commissioning structure to effectively demonstrate the capability and potential scope of partnership working to deliver elections.	September 2017	Completed
		The formal review of the General Election on 8 June 2017 has been completed and presented to GFC in October 2017 (see ref 3.1). This review has incorporated feedback from internal and external stakeholders gathered through online surveys and face to face meetings (see 3.1).	October 2017	Completed
		The key lessons learnt from the activities and experiences of this election and recommendations will be progressed in preparation for the next election.	May 2018	In progress

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
G. **Review the performance of staff employed to undertake roles on the canvass, at polling stations and at the count.**	6.1 The Head of Electoral Services will develop a set of key performance indicators to be used for more formally reviewing the performance of individual members of staff used for the conduct of elections and electoral registration (specific to the particular role any individual is appointed to deliver), with a minimum requirement that they are effectively operational in time for use at the Local Elections scheduled for May 2018.	**Canvass** Utilising the new software management system and mobile tablets, a set of key performance indicators have been developed to monitor performance of all temporary staff undertaking personal visits as part of the annual HEF canvas in 2017, with the aim of maximising the response rate to ensure the register is as accurate and up to date as possible during this period. **Polling and Count** Existing performance management processes will be reviewed and enhanced for the key staff that undertake polling and count roles at the May 2018 local elections.	September 2017 May 2018	Completed Ongoing

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
H. **Embed the count coordinator role within the registration and elections team**	7.1 The Director of Assurance will work with the Returning Officer, Barnet's Human Resources partner and the Head of Electoral Services to develop and propose a new structure for the Electoral Services team that will: • incorporate the count coordinator responsibilities within the permanent staff population of the service (whilst ensuring that there is no significant loss of corporate knowledge or experience in relation to the responsibilities of this role) • allow the wider team to both fully engage in new ways of working to support the demands of the electoral registration and elections in Barnet • provide opportunities for future team development and secure more robust succession planning within the service 7.2 The Director of Assurance will work with the Head of Electoral Services and oversee the implementation of the new structure within the Electoral Services team in a timely and effective manner. It is estimated that the restructure of the Electoral Services Team can be fully completed and operational by the end of June 2017 following consultation with staff (assuming no changes to current election timetables are forthcoming).	Responsibility and resource for the Count Co-ordinator role, is firmly embedded within the Electoral Services Team. However, where additional valuable experience exists within the organisation, it will continue to be utilised. **Flexible Staffing Structure during election period or canvas period** As referenced in 4.1 above, for the June 2017 General Election, the Electoral Services team was supplemented with an additional five members of full-time staff, who were seconded-in from across the Assurance Directorate (4) and Adult Social Services (1). The full complement of staff was split between a 'Registration Team' and an 'Elections Project Team' although a high degree of flexibility in temporarily moving staff members between these teams as required (e.g. to meet specific statutory deadlines etc.). **Permanent staffing structure** Based upon learnings during the delivery of the general election in June 2017, a new role of Democratic Engagement Project Manager was quickly developed and established. It has already been successfully recruited to in the first instance through a 1 year secondment that commenced on the 1st September. This role gives the team appropriate extra capacity and skill to establish and embed the full suite of recommendations in this report including development new team structure. Plans for further training and development of the team are being developed – with a view to finding ways to enhance existing staff experience and knowledge with more formal training (and possibly AEA qualifications in future). Along with the rest of the organisation, Electoral Services are working with the TW3 programme to engage in new modern ways of working and to have this robustly tested and embedded ahead of scheduled office relocation next year.	May 2017 May 2017 September 2017 January 2018	Completed Completed Completed In progress
I. **Fully implement the restructuring of the registration and elections team and engage the team in new ways of working to support the**				

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
intent of the restructuring. Consider as part of this the opportunity for team development				
J. **Confirm the budget position for the replacement of the IER transitional grant, which is coming to an end**	8.1 The Returning Officer will work with the Director of Assurance and the Director of Resources to ensure that the budget position of the Electoral Services team continues to be sufficient and appropriate to the demands upon the service. In particular, the ongoing budgetary demands placed upon the service by the implementation of IER since 2012 will be closely monitored and budgeted for as required.	An additional £190k of funding has been made available to Electoral Services from 2017/18 to ensure that all service costs are sufficiently covered as the Cabinet Office funding (for the transition and embedding of IER) gradually decreases year on year. Any remaining budget-provision will be placed into reserve to allow any new or currently unforeseen costs to be met in the next few years. We will continue to review the budget position as well as aim to drive down costs, particularly print and postage, through the implementation of new technologies and processes (particularly during the annual HEF Household Canvass – e.g. mobile tablets).	April 2017	Completed
K. **Embed a quality assurance process to check the details of key documentation/outputs – including poll cards, postal votes, registers, polling station equipment, HEFs, ITRs etc.**	9.1 The Director of Assurance and Head of Electoral Services (in consultation with the Returning Officer) will develop revised processes for the checking of key documents being generated by Electoral Services and also ensure that there is appropriate resource within the wider Commissioning Group and Assurance Directorate to support the external verification and proofing of critical and essential documentary outputs.	Work is already underway to develop processes to check key documents. Some new processes for quality assurance have already been successfully implemented and used in the recent General Election 2017. The new processes include: • Additional independent proof checking of all election materials (e.g. poll cards, election notices, polling station documents etc.) • Comprehensive (page by page) proof checks of individual polling station registers, overseen by Returning Officer (or designated deputies) and the Director of Assurance	May 2017	Complete
L. **Further consider detailed working practices within the team to address efficiency and effectiveness particularly as it relates to intense period activity**	9.2 Further to this, the Director of Assurance will work with the senior managers across the Commissioning Group to develop a wider staff resource that is both trained and available to support the Electoral Services	The final suite of quality assurance processes to support external verification and proofing of critical and essential documentary outputs will be incorporated into the new procedures (see ref 2.2 and 2.3)	April 2018	Ongoing

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
	Team across the various critical and time-consuming processes and activities necessary during periods of intense activity for elections and registration throughout the electoral cycle.		May 2017	Completed
M. **Plan and prepare early for additional staffing needs at times of intense activity and train and prepare those staff**		As previously stated (above 7.1 and 7.2) I for the 2017 General Election, the Electoral Services team was supplemented with an additional five members of full-time staff, who were seconded-in from across the Assurance Directorate (4) and Adult Social Services (1). This additional staffing resource supported the Electoral Services Team across the across the various critical and time-consuming processes and activities necessary during periods of intense activity for elections and registration throughout the electoral cycle. This approach to increasing capacity in the run up to election will be repeated for the May 2018 election.		
N. **Consider further planning and action to consult, engage and proactively inform relevant staff and stakeholders of actions being taken and concerning critical points in the process of registration and elections**	10.1 The Head of Electoral Services will develop and run an informal and advisory 'Democracy Working Group' comprised of invited and relevant staff and stakeholders (e.g. Members, Election Agents, Staff from LBB Communications, Representatives of Local Community Groups etc.). Although this group cannot and will not have any decision making powers, the purpose of the group will be to communicate current planning and activities within Electoral Services and to take on board feedback regarding those activities and plans. It is currently estimated that a first meeting of this advisory group (to agree Terms of Reference, frequency and nature of meetings etc.) can be arranged for early in 2017.	In preparing for the June 2017 General Election we consulted, engaged and proactively informed key stakeholders through various methods. Weekly Project Meetings were chaired by the Acting Returning Officer with Key senior stakeholders present at all meeting, including Deputy Acting Returning Officers (DAROs), Head of Electoral Services, Elections Project Manager, Monitoring Officer, representatives from Communications Team, Customer Services Group and the Head of IT. This ensured that all key stakeholders were aware of progress, could contribute suggestions based on previous experience and offer solutions to any problems that arose. In addition the Head of Electoral Services also held a number of ongoing and ad-hoc meetings with the various members of the project team to discuss and plan specific preparation activities, review and develop certain critical election processes (e.g. the return of ballot boxes to the count venue), assess and procure required resources and to investigate any particular element of the project for which it was considered necessary.

Feedback gathered from key stakeholders has been used to inform the review and inform recommendations for future elections. This process will occur after every election.

The Democratic Engagement Project Manager will be | May 2017

November | Completed

In progress |

Smith Recommendation	Council's initial response / Action	Progress to date	End target date	Status
		launching a Democracy Working Group in November 2017. Meetings will initially be set up to quarterly. This group aims to enhance communications with key stakeholders more broadly throughout the complete electoral cycle, for example Canvass and pre-election periods.	2017.	
O. **Review and further systematise arrangements within the team for handling reactive communications from staff, the public and stakeholders and for the management of communications from the contact centre**	11.1 The Returning Officer and Interim Chief Executive, Director of Strategy and Customer Services and the Director of Assurance to work with appropriate directors from CSG to enhance current arrangements and further develop provisions for the operational processes and responsibilities of a discrete elections call-centre operation when required. These arrangements to include additional training for call centre agents with the objective of driving up quality of advice and speed of resolution to residents and electors enquires. Following this, CSG and Electoral Services (in consultation with the Communications Team) to further develop the systemised arrangements between them for the handling of contacts from the public and other stakeholders during the period that an elections call centre is operational.	As stated previously (ref 10.1), senior managers from Customer Services Group (CSG) were present at the weekly Elections Project Management meetings in preparation for the June General Election. This ensured that key managers were aware of progress, could contribute suggestions based on previous experience and offer solutions to any problems that arose.	April 2017	Completed
P. **Continue to develop the arrangements between the contact centre and the elections team to identify improvements in the preparation for elections, in contingency planning and in the communication between the contact centre and the elections team for live issues.**		As in previous years, arrangements were made with Customer Services Group for the provision of a dedicated 'Elections Call Centre' to take and answer all first level telephone and email contacts from the Electoral Registration Team. The Electoral Registration Manager visited the CSG Coventry offices for 2 days to provide all the Elections Call Centre staff with full and comprehensive training before go live, including introduction to the new Electoral Management System, Elector8. The core objective of this enhanced training was to drive up quality of advice and speed of resolution to residents and electors enquires. The Elections Call Centre also provided additional support to manage the Elections Inbox. This proved a successful way of managing customer enquiries.

The Electoral Registration Manager, deputised by the Election Project Manager acted as a single point of enquiry for the Contact Centre staff for managing communications and issues.

We will work with CSG to explore further improvements and efficiencies to the way we manage calls and email enquiries in preparation for the May 2018 election. | April 2017

May 2018 | Completed

Ongoing |

Appendix 2 - Comparative data for London Authorities UKPGE17

Borough	Online/ITR Applications (18/4 - 22/5)	Online/ITR Applications on 22/5/20	Additions	Deletions	Duplicates	Overseas Additions	RM Sweep	PV's from polling sttions	Postal Vote Replacements	Emergency Proxies	Rejected Postal Votes	Electorate (July)	Postal Voters (July)	Emails 18/4/2017 - 9/6/2017	Phone Calls 18/4/2017 - 9/6/2017
A	48,096	8,561	31,468	3,003	17,000	1,455	205	3,132	222	229	611	247,944	50,228	14,504	12,750
B	43,919	7,303	19,159	9,038	19,010	839	261	2,376	144	28	1,630	198,215	32,686	6,193	9,923
C	37,677	3,048	12,463	5,934	7,601	1,353	88	2,160	170	105	486	238,809	25,845	10,197	8,795
DD	36,178	2,796	9,499	4,433	15,239	1,049	52	976	463	86	536	218,051	30,430	10,284	8,304
E	27,567	2,250	20,952	9,299	10,990	2,637	64	1,201	239	78	794	182,853	31,125	6,408	Not reported
F	26,156	2,216	18,787	6,432	8,295	641	188	1,632	371	150	343	206,918	26,635	3,841	11,971
G	25,026	2,066	15,233	7,324	9,641	1,479	81	1,483	200	60	531	162,219	23,673	8,723	Not reported
H	24,670	3,002	12,842	3,478	8350	637	0	929	307	39	1055	Not reported	Not reported	9,114	Not reported
I	24,260	3,571	18,789	3,557	8465	558	267	1,698	195	36	596	251,071	45,553	6,632	11,262
Barnet	22,270	3,339	14,736	2,220	7,611	749	192	2,200	254	145	841	254,220	53,653	8,994	5,905
J	21,892	3,988	12,418	3,470	8,698	1,751	154	912	224	48	431	243,761	40,152	6,933	7619
K	20,541	2,865	16,470	5,189	11,709	114	261	1,452	158	24	615	206,961	29,961	3,370	Not reported
L	19,371	4,041	13,654	5,243	4,899	103	199	1,401	127	22	543	231,370	27,412	11,789	2,943
M	19,326	5,179	18,944	2,372	9,365	207	34	2,450	137	52	848	188,747	24,798	5,565	Not reported
N	18,670	4,508	6,532	3,754	5,527	654	82	930	121	25	424	120,254	23,577	4,916	Not reported
O	17,720	3,553	10,561	3,785	5,292	448	Not reported	Not reported	126	53	384	193,981	26,604	7,361	Not reported
P	17,544	3,080	11,189	4,672	4,860	650	48	1,504	159	47	344	134,170	22,689	7,614	3,734
Q	16,815	3,173	7,137	1,849	4,824	1,640	Not reported	2,053	123	74	307	145,400	27,172	3,402	4524
R	15,861	4,547	8,257	5,490	7,632	262	187	1,732	176	26	721	165,033	32,322	Not reported	5,420
S	15,488	1,746	8,173	1,518	5,864	130	250	1,009	145	35	499	193,031	27,504	5,687	4,506
T	15,254	Not reported	9,302	Not reported	6,473	Not reported	41	1,447	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	211,935	29,233	Not reported	Not reported
U	14,281	2,765	10,606	4,341	7,364	461	6	Not reported	169	34	263	141,625	22,585	4,000	5,760
V	13,485	2,156	13,172	2,995	2,636	536	291	1766	313	54	590	161,085	29,864	Not reported	Not reported
W	13,204	2,406	9,641	4,646	4,850	493	Not reported	Not reported	92	23	314	157,107	21,753	4,476	Not reported
X	13,144	2,664	7,937	2,853	1,612	386	Not reported	434	112	36	625	196,409	29,260	5847	Unknown
Y	12,427	3,099	6,451	1,978	2,786	147	94	1132	132	9	567	136,556	20,295	Not reported	Not reported
Z	9,998	2,479	7,603	3,325	2,602	347	54	757	178	36	296	99,916	17,541	6,573	6893
AA	9,635	2,440	5,147	4,578	5,376	150	158	1,059	137	23	409	192,632	27,877	4,428	Not reported
BB	9,371	Not reported	5,940	Not reported	2,429	281	51	1,563	58	18	600	201,044	30,459	3,143	Not reported
CC	9,365	1,001	5,764	1,982	2,751	250	483	906	80	27	233	152,766	24,758	Not reported	Not reported
DD	9,306	1,715	10,349	4,974	5,319	289	222	1,487	216	29	377	218,680	26,725	Not reported	Not reported
EE	466	110	425	192	162	36	Not reported	Not reported	19	1	Not reported	6653	1970	500	Not reported
TOTALS	**628,983**	**95,667**	**379,600**	**123,924**	**225,232**	**20,732**	**4,013**	**41,781**	**5,567**	**1,652**	**16,813**	**5,659,416**	**884,339**	**170,494**	**110,309**