



Constitution and General Purposes Committee

22 October 2018

Title	Review of the Local Government Elections - 3 May 2018
Report of	John Hooton - Chief Executive and Returning Officer
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A - Report of the review of the Local Government Elections on 3 May 2018
Officer Contact Details	Emily Bowler, Head of Business Development and Project Delivery (Assurance) 020 8359 4463 - emily.bowler@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This report provides Committee with a review of the planning, implementation and delivery of the Local Government Elections held on 3 May 2018 for election of all 63 ward councillors within the London Borough of Barnet. The report also identifies the key lessons learnt and makes recommendations to benefit future election projects.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the recommendations made in the Local Elections Review (Appendix A) from the elections held on 3 May 2018.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 So that the Constitution and General Purposes Committee have 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 Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.
- 1.2 This internal review of the Local Elections project concludes that the process for the administration of the election ran smoothly across all Wards, with no major issues. The overall turnout across Barnet was 43.7% compared to London which was 38.9%. For these Elections 109,125 electors cast their votes, with 69.1% casting their votes across Barnet's 156 polling stations at 94 locations and 30.9% voting by post.
- 1.3 The next scheduled borough-wide elections that are due to take place in Barnet are on 7 May 2020 for the Greater London Authority and London Mayoral elections, and then the Local Government and UK Parliamentary General Election in May 2022. The learning and recommendations from this report will inform the planning and preparation for the next election.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council has a duty to provide the authority's Returning Officer (who has 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.
- 2.2 This report helps to provide Constitution and General Purposes Committee with relevant information to:
- ensure that the Council has met its obligations in this regard
 - ask any necessary questions to satisfy themselves that provision for future elections will be sufficient and appropriate.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 None

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Returning Officer, Assurance Director and Head of Electoral Services will commence the planning and implementation of the recommendations included in the report.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

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 The costs of Council (local government) elections 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.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 No applicable

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 Article 7 of the constitution sets out the functions of the Constitution and General Purposes Committee which includes overseeing the Council's governance arrangements including elections and electoral registration performance.

5.4.2 Section 8(2)(a) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 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.

5.4.3 Each London Borough is then 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 (e.g the Electoral Registration Officer)) to be the Returning Officer (RO) for elections of borough councillors.

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 identify and minimise 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 Corporate Parenting

8.7.1 Not applicable

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

5.8.1 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.

5.8 Insight

5.8.1 In order to develop this review and to propose its conclusions, a number of sources of information and feedback were utilised including:

- Feedback from members of the London Borough of Barnet's Elections Project Board and other key individuals from the project team.
- 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 as for election in the 21 Wards of the London Borough of Barnet
- A review of written and email contacts, queries and complaints that were received from residents, electors and other stakeholders both during and after the election period.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 'Review of the General Election held on 8 June 2017.'¹

¹ See GFC November 2017, Item 7 <https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MID=9283>