



Constitution and General Purposes Committee

7 October 2019

Title	Review of the European Parliamentary Elections - 23-26 May 2019
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 European Parliamentary Elections - 23-26 May 2019
Officer Contact Details	Emily Bowler, Head of Assurance & Business Development 020 8359 4463 - emily.bowler@barnet.gov.uk John Bailey, Head of Electoral Services & Geographic Information Service 020 8359 3008 – john.e.bailey@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This report provides the Committee with a review of the planning, implementation and delivery of the European Parliamentary Elections held on 23 May 2019 for the election of 8 Members of the European Parliament to represent the London region.

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 European Parliamentary (EU) Elections Review (Appendix A) from the elections held on 23 May 2019.

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 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 There is much speculation that an earlier short-notice (or 'snap') UK Parliamentary General Election and/or a further EU Referendum could be held in the near future, so lessons from the European Parliamentary elections will be of great value to the planning and preparations for such an event.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 This review of the project to deliver the European Parliamentary elections within the London Borough of Barnet's voting area concludes that, despite the preceding uncertainty and short notice that they would go ahead, the elections on 23 May 2019 were delivered very successfully.
- 2.2 All the project's objectives were met and both polling day and the election count passed without major issues.
- 2.3 Overall turnout across Barnet was 42.5% which compares positively versus London-wide at 41.3% and UK-wide at 36.9%. Turnout in Barnet was also 2.7% higher than at the last EU Parliamentary elections, held in 2014 (when the election was combined with Barnet's Local Government elections).
- 2.4 In Barnet at this election, 97,267 electors cast their vote - of this figure, 67,824 electors cast their votes in-person across Barnet's 156 polling stations and 29,442 voted by post.

2.5 These figures give a clear indication that electors were able to cast their vote, in the way that they chose and confirms that there were no wide-spread issues that stopped eligible electors from either getting registered or casting their votes.

2.6 At present, the next scheduled borough-wide elections due to take place in Barnet are the London Mayoral and Greater London Authority (GLA) elections on 7 May 2020. Local Government and UK Parliamentary General Elections are then scheduled in May 2022.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 None

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The Returning Officer, Director of Assurance, Head of Electoral Services and Head of Assurance and Business Development will immediately implement the recommendations included in the report.

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 the different statutory elections, all 'actual and necessary' costs for borough-wide elections (other than Local Government elections) are reimbursed to the Council from central government. In the case of costs for the European Parliamentary elections, these are reimbursed to the Council from the Cabinet Office.

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 Council's Returning Officer (RO) at local elections

5.4.4 The European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002, Section 6 designates that all London borough Returning Officers take the role of Local Returning Officer (LRO) for their voting area (with the London Borough of Lewisham's Returning Officer becoming the Regional Returning Officer (RRO) for the London region).

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. The actions proposed by the review will help to minimise and/or manage 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

5.7.1 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.

5.9 Insight

5.9.1 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
- 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 'Local Government Elections - 3 May 2018.'¹

¹ See *CGP 22 October 2018*, <https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9502&Ver=4>