



## ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

### REPORT

### e-Counting Project 2017 – Update as at April 2016

### MEETING

22 April 2016

#### INTRODUCTION

1. This is the latest update on the current status of the preparatory work which is underway in relation to the e-Counting Project 2017.

#### e-COUNTING SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

2. Following the User Trials in January, some 25 suggested revisions were proposed and these were submitted to the User Group for their meeting on 23 February 2016. Each suggested revision was considered by the User Group, and if supported, prioritised and referred to the Project Board for final approval. The Project Board gave approval for the key system changes to be carried out, subject to cost implications.
3. CGI responded to the list of suggested revisions in the form of a draft Contract Change Note which set out the impact in terms of development effort and financial impact. Following an assessment by the Project Team, a decision was made to take no further action on a small number of the proposed amendments which required technically complex changes, and therefore cost, for relatively modest end-user benefits. The Project Team believes that the revised list provides value for money and indeed adds value in a number of areas. An amended Contract Change Note is currently with the Scottish Government for approval. A proposal to develop a report to undertake the consolidation of ballot boxes containing fewer than 200 papers has been continued for further consideration as it is simply a reporting development which does not impact on the Stage 2 technical testing programme described below.

#### STAGE 2 TECHNICAL TESTING

4. The Stage 2 tests have been broken into testing blocks to allow the discrete review of areas of capability of the e-count solution, minimising interdependencies between the test sets. Work has commenced on the following testing blocks, with the target date for completion being 5 July 2016:

- Scanner Settings
- Ballot Paper Mark-up (Pen, pencil, faint marks etc)
- Known Results Validation
- System Accessibility and Usability
- System Security and Penetration Testing
- Disaster Recovery Test
- Software Enhancements (e.g. intelligent character recognition)
- Performance Testing
- Algorithm Testing
- Easyprint Process Validation

## **MOCK COUNTS**

5. Following a request from Moray Council to repeat an event which took place in Aberdeen in 2012 for authorities in the North of Scotland, the Project Team has agreed with CGI that they will establish a test count centre for role-specific training early in 2017. It's likely that 6 authorities will attend the session in Aberdeen and a suitable venue is being sought with a view to the training being delivered in either the week commencing 20 February 2017 or week commencing 13 March 2017. Of the other 26 authorities only 4 have indicated a preference to conduct a full count, with the others split roughly evenly between the "Observe" and "Participate" options. The 4 "full count" authorities have been invited to select a preferred date. Thereafter, the authorities who have indicated a preference to participate will be invited to join with other authorities to run a full mock count. Authorities wishing to observe the process will be free to attend on any of the days when a mock count is being carried out. The mock counts will be held on 9 September and between 13 and 23 September.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

6. The Board is invited to note the position in relation to a number of other elements of the project:
  - Online Portal – Authorities have now been given access to the portal which will over time be populated with advice, guidance and other material to assist the electoral community.
  - Call-Off Contracts – A draft Call-Off Contract for use by individual authorities in Stage 4 (the Elections themselves) has been sent for initial review to senior legal officers within both Glasgow City Council and the City of Edinburgh Council.
  - Splitting Count Centres – CGI have commenced conversations with the largest authorities on the impact of splitting their count centres into two to enhance the efficiency of the count process.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

7. The Board is invited to:

- Note the current status of the different strands of the e-Counting Project 2017.

D McGregor,

Edinburgh,

12 April 2016