



ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

REPORT e-Counting Project 2017 – Update as at February 2016

MEETING 26 February 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.

USER TRIALS

2. A total of 173 delegates, including a number of Returning Officers, from 28 authorities attended the above during the two week period commencing 18 January. Arrangements have been made to visit another authority that was not able to attend during the trial period. Although described in the contract documentation as User Trials, the sessions provided an ideal opportunity for both previous users to re-familiarise themselves with the system, and new staff to gain an overview of the end-to-end process. More importantly, they provided an opportunity for practitioners to get “hands-on” experience and suggest enhancements to system functionality. Detailed feedback was received from 23 authorities, and it’s clear that the event was well received, with a substantial number of very positive comments. The Project Team has analysed all feedback and compiled a schedule of some 25 suggested revisions which, in the main, relate to screen layouts and report formats. The system supplier is also still working through a range of changes to report formats, new reports which were requested prior to engaging with authorities, and there’s a degree of overlap between the two.
3. The list of suggested enhancements and a note of other comments is being submitted to the meeting of the User Group on 23 February 2016.

SYSTEM TESTING

4. Since establishing two test count centres within Pentland House, CGI have been undertaking a range of compliance and technical tests to demonstrate compliance with the contract requirements. Scottish Government officials, local authority ICT experts and the EMB have been present throughout the tests which have included a range of binary compliance tests, six full counts each involving 20,000 ballot papers, and a further two full counts using 50,000 papers each time. Plans are in place to undertake a test with 80,000 ballot papers on 25 February 2016. Any gaps in the system performance were documented to detail any requirements that were not met and CGI has now produced a full technical assurance report on the compliance trials covering the following areas:

- Ballot Processing (inc Paper Handling & Count Workflow)
- Performance Testing
- Security
- Data Handling
- Business Continuity

5. The report is still being reviewed, but I'm happy to report that excellent progress is being made. Further detailed tests are being drawn up by Liz Ure, the Technical Assurance Lead, as the project moves forward.

OTHER MATTERS

6. The following other strands of work are being taken forward:

- Portal – CGI are in the process of creating a portal which will serve as a “one-stop shop” for information and documents relating to the project, and this is beginning to be populated. A dedicated email address has also been created. Details on how to access the portal etc will be issued via the Bulletin.
- Election Results Data – The Project Team is beginning to give some thought to how best ensure the co-ordinated and consistent production of election data at the local and national level.
- Call-Off Contracts – The contract awarded by the Scottish Government is a Single Supplier Framework Agreement and a “call-off” contract has been signed for Stages 1 to 3 of the project. Each authority who wishes to use the e-counting system will require to enter into a separate “call-off” contract. The Project Team are planning to liaise with a small core group of local authority lawyers to review the contract documentation with a view to recommending the document to authorities via the EMB.
- Mock Counts/Bulk Test –The contract requires CGI to organise and deliver a mock count for each authority and a bulk test with 200,000 ballot papers during September of this year. The

Project Team is considering how to most effectively deliver these events and will be seeking views from authorities on how they wish to participate in the mock count process to best suit their needs.

RECOMMENDATION

7. The Board is invited to:

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

D McGregor,

Edinburgh,

18 February 2016