ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

REPORT   **e-Counting Project 2017 – Update as at May 2016**

MEETING   **27 May 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.

STAGE 2 TECHNICAL TESTING

2. In my April update I provided some information on the different testing blocks which were being progressed by CGI and work is continuing on these within Pentland House with appropriate input from Idox. The target completion date remains 5 July 2016.

3. Two performance tests, each processing 40,000 ballot papers, have been carried out using the latest release of the e-counting software during May. This release contains the system enhancements requested by the Project Team following the User Trials in January. By way of context it is estimated that around 12 authorities will have fewer than this number of ballot papers to count next May. Within each of the tests the scanning element has been completed within the estimated three hour period. Further analysis is being done on adjudication response times and the operation of the enhanced character recognition software. Additional scanners and associated hardware have been purchased to facilitate the 140,000 ballot paper tests programmed for next month. Only two authorities are likely to have in excess of this number of ballot papers next May.

4. Work has now commenced on testing the complete process flow of the e-counting system to produce the Election Detailed Specification (EDS). This will contain process flow charts for every element of the system. As well as the EDS the Project Team are contemplating producing a "Quick start" guide to help troubleshoot the scenarios that are most likely to occur during the count process.

5. The Project Team has reviewed a further iteration of the enhanced e-counting report suite and this work is nearing completion, and we intend to present these to the User Group and Project Board at an early date. Some initial dialogue on developing a tool to undertake the time-consuming box consolidation process (ballot boxes with fewer than 200 votes) has taken place with Idox will be taken forward in the next month. Current thinking is for this to be undertaken using the "EasyPrint" tool outwith the count itself.

MOCK COUNTS

6. Only 3 authorities are now planning to conduct a full count during the time set aside in September within the Dewars Centre, Perth. The 15 authorities who indicated a preference to participate in the mock count process with other authorities have been invited to indicate when they would like to attend. At the time of writing, 5 have replied with firm dates. Once these authorities have been aggregated into viable sized groups to undertake an appropriately scaled mock count, the remaining 8 authorities who wish only to observe will be invited to attend on any day that a mock count is underway. Arrangements for the event to be held in Aberdeen have not yet been finalised although CGI have provided a specification of the space etc requirements.

7. The Maltese Electoral Commission has asked if they can attend to observe a mock count, as they are in the process of introducing electronic counting for their elections which all use the STV system. Consideration is also being given to the location and date for a wider stakeholder event.

OTHER MATTERS

8. The Board is invited to note the position in relation to a number of other elements of the project:

   - Call-Off Contracts – Glasgow City Council has very helpfully provided an initial comment on the draft Call-Off contract and a discussion has been initiated with another council

RECOMMENDATION

9. The Board is invited to:

   - Note the current status of the key tasks within the e-Counting Project 2017.

D McGregor,

Edinburgh,

23 May 2016