



## ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

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

### **MEETING    28 October 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.

#### **MOCK COUNTS & BULK TESTS**

2. Around 400 officers from 30 authorities attended the above events in Perth during September and either participated in or observed a mock count. In addition to the local authority delegates, there were a number of other observers, including: the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Joe Fitzpatrick MSP; Alexander Stewart MSP MBE; as well as representatives from the Electoral Commission, the Maltese Electoral Commission and the Greater London Authority.
3. Feedback received was very positive and the opportunity was taken to increase the scale of the largest bulk test from the planned 160,000 level to 200,000 ballot papers, which was carried out on three occasions. There was also a day devoted to a disaster recovery exercise aimed at testing the e-counting supplier's disaster recovery procedures. Although unplanned, there was a power failure during one of the bulk tests and this provided a further opportunity to test system resilience.

#### **COMMERCIAL DOCUMENTATION**

4. All ROs and Elections Managers have now been provided with a copy of the 'Buyers Guide' and supporting guidance material produced by Scottish Procurement. The 'Buyers Guide' explains the means by which Services Agreements are drawn down from the main Framework agreement (signed between the Scottish Government and CGI). The next phase of commercial documentation will be the issue of the Services Agreement, in effect the "Call-Off" contracts.

## **NEW SOFTWARE AT BY-ELECTIONS**

5. The updated version of the e-counting software which will be utilised next May was deployed, for the first time at a by-election in Glasgow on 6 October. There were no operational issues, with the count being completed around 90 minutes after the close of poll. It will be used again in forthcoming by-elections, covering four wards, in Aberdeenshire and Angus councils during November and December.

## **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

6. Consistent with the arrangements adopted in 2012, authorities will be issued with two invoices during Stage 4 of the e-counting project, with the first of these on 26 January and the second on 26 May 2017. The aggregate value of the January billing will be £1.899m, with a further £2.348m due in May. The costs of the e-counting system and ballot papers will be apportioned to authorities on the basis of the number of electors in September 2014. The cost of postal packs will be apportioned having regard to the number of absent voters as at the end of September 2016.
7. The Scottish Government will re-imburse the cost of the e-counting system but not the cost of ballot papers or postal voting packs, and any additional services procured by Returning Officers within their Services Agreement with CGI.

## **TRAINING**

8. Dedicated role-based training will be delivered over a four week period commencing with a week in the Beach Ballroom, Aberdeen on 20 February, followed by three weeks in Pentland House, Edinburgh.
9. Initial scheduling for the Aberdeen event has been completed, and this location will be attended by Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Highland, Moray, Orkney and Shetland councils. Two count centres will be set-up with 7 and 3 scanners respectively allowing with one large and one small authority to attend each day.
10. Arrangements will now be put in place for the Edinburgh training sessions and contact has been made with the 5 largest authorities to get a sense of how many staff they envisage bringing for training. Again, a two count centre model will be utilised.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND DRAFT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

11. Draft copies of two data collection returns were submitted to the August meeting of the Board. Since then some further work has been done to incorporate additional information on the number of first preference votes gained by each party/candidate. These pro-forma were “road-tested” with data relating to the recent Glasgow by-election, and both Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils have been asked to complete them for the forthcoming by-elections.

A draft Performance Management Framework, in similar form to that introduced for the EPE in May 2014 and subsequent electoral events has been drafted. All of these documents will be discussed with the Electoral Commission and every effort will be made to make it clear to stakeholders what information is going to be requested and when.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

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

- Online Portal – Login details etc for the new Portal will be issued to authorities in the next few days.
- Idox Print Workshop – all authorities are being invited to attend a workshop covering all aspects of print at Pentland House on Wednesday 16 November 2016.
- Gateway Review – as part of the ongoing independent assurance of the e-counting project, a further review will be conducted over the period 1 to 3 November, within St Andrew's House.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

13. The Board is invited to:

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

D McGregor,

Edinburgh,

21 October 2016