

e-Counting for the 2017

Scottish Local Government Elections

MONTHLY BULLETIN FROM THE PROJECT TEAM

Issue 03, 18th December 2015

FOR INFO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bulletin – this is the third Bulletin aimed at informing the electoral community of progress with the project to deliver e-counting for the 2017 local government elections. As this project develops, further Bulletins will be issued regularly by the e-counting Project Team, whose contact details are on the following page.
FOR RESPONSE	<p>USER TRIALS SESSIONS – JANUARY/ FEBRUARY 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The e-counting supplier CGI, in partnership with IDOX, have now established a Count Centre at Pentland House, Edinburgh. In the past few weeks, the supplier, working with the Scottish Government team, have begun to conduct a series of structured technical tests to demonstrate that the e-counting system for 2017 is fully operational. These initial technical compliance tests will conclude early in January 2016.• As discussed in the last bulletin (No.2, 6th November 2017) the next phase in the e-counting process will be the User Trials which begin on 18 January. Over the course of the following weeks, council election teams will attend Pentland House for a short, one-day session offering early familiarisation with the e-counting system.• The User Trials will be an ideal opportunity for staff in your core election teams to acquaint themselves with the system. Detailed training on each of the key roles will be provided much nearer the date of the May 2017 election.• Thanks to all of you for responding to our request for suitable dates for your attendance at the User Trials. Now that dates are fixed, you should have received a letter of invitation issued by email from Alex Mowat on 16 December. The letter (and a more detailed handout which is to follow) provides some further information about the format of the User Trial day. If you haven't received the letter, please contact Alex Mowat at: alex.mowat@gov.scot; 0131 244 0586.• In the above letter, council election teams are asked to contact Dougie McGregor with the names of the members of your team attending the User Trials, which we need for security purposes. Dougie can be contacted at: dougie.mcgregor@edinburgh.gov.uk; 07712 389 443.

FOR INFO.

- **Security** – one final point on the User Trials concerning building security. Since the terrorist attacks in Paris last month the Scottish Government is operating at a heightened security level and this involves making additional checks regarding access to Scottish Government buildings. In advance of the January User Trials, our Security team may therefore make contact with councils to confirm your involvement in the e-counting exercise. This should be a straightforward contact. Thank you in advance for your understanding.
- **Project Governance** – on a day-to-day basis, the e-counting project is led by a Project Team from the Scottish Government. We are carrying forward this work in conjunction with the Electoral Management Board whose representative, Dougie McGregor, is a key member of the Project Team. The EMB will be kept fully informed of progress on an ongoing basis.
- At a senior level, the project is being overseen by the Project Board which was formed in late 2014. The Board includes Returning Officers and Depute Returning Officers and is chaired by the Scottish Government's Head of Strategy, Elections and FOI, Heather McCauley. The latest meeting of the Project Board took place on 17 December 2015.
- To feed into the work of the Project Board, a User Group and a Technical Assurance Group have been established. While the Technical Assurance Group meets on an ad hoc basis, the User Group, which held its first meeting on 24 November, will convene at key points in the project when they are best able to add value. They are most likely to meet again following the User Trials to consider feedback received from Councils on the e-counting system. Further details will follow.
- **Financial Arrangements** – the e-Counting contract has a total value of c£6.5m, excluding VAT and while the Scottish Government will be responsible for making most of the contract payments as they fall due, you are asked to note that Returning Officers will be invoiced directly by CGI at two stages during the contract period. The first of these will be at the end of January 2017 and will amount to an aggregate c£1.9m predominantly related to hardware for count venues. The second will be at the end of May 2017 and will amount to c£2.3m for services, software, ballot papers and postal packs.
- As in 2012 the Scottish Government will subsequently reimburse ROs for the costs associated with the e-Counting solution, subject to deductions in respect of producing ballot papers, postal voting packs and any other bespoke additional services commissioned under the Framework Contract Services Agreement. You will receive a note of the estimated cost of ballot papers etc at an early date to inform 2017/18 spending decisions.
- These arrangements are all very much as adopted in 2012 and will allow VAT to be recovered of some two thirds of the contract value.

***** FINALLY, BEST WISHES TO ALL FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR *****

For more information please contact a member of the e-counting Project Team:

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