e-Counting for the
2017
Scottish Local Government Elections

INFORMATION BULLETIN FROM THE PROJECT TEAM
Issue 06, 15th July 2016

FOR INFO.	• **Bulletin** – this is the latest 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 INFO.	**REFINEMENT OF THE E-COUNTING SYSTEM** • Since the last Bulletin was circulated in March, work has taken place to refine the e-counting system in line with changes suggested by local authority election teams. The changes to the system were assessed and prioritised by the User Group and approved by the Project Board. • The system changes include some additional 'safety' features aimed at preventing inadvertent mistakes by users of the e-counting system. For example, a scanning operator cannot now 'open' a new box for scanning without first closing the previous one. All the changes made can be viewed by those of you attending the Mock Count sessions in Perth this September. One change requested by participants at the User Trials is that observers at counts will be able to view different contents on different screens and this function will, again, be on show at the Mock Counts. • Further details of the system changes will be made available shortly on the online Portal, including examples of the revised and improved system reports. **REPORTS** • The reports produced by the e-counting system have been tidied up to make them easier to read and interpret. Copies of the new reports will be made available in the online Portal in due course and we will advise you when they have been uploaded. • One particular innovation which was suggested during the User Trials concerns the amalgamation of data from boxes containing less than 200 papers. Firstly, the 'Preferences by Ballot Box' report will highlight those boxes containing less than 200 papers, making these boxes easier to identify. However, we are aware that amalgamating these boxes can be a chore so we've asked our supplier to work on a time-saving solution. We are working with Idox on a facility to export preferences by box in a csv file for subsequent amalgamation within "EasyPrint". More on this to follow.

FOR INFO.	**ELECTION INFORMATION**
	• Once the improved versions of the reports are available, it is hoped that – between now and next May - we can build a consensus across all councils about the publishing of the key reports on council websites, immediately following local government elections.
	• While this project is primarily concerned with the successful delivery of e-counting for the 2017 local government elections, we are also giving some early thought to the publication of election results data. You will be aware that there is increasing interest from politicians, academics and others in having swift access to consistent data on the outcome of the local government elections covering all Scotland's council areas.
	• We would, therefore, welcome views on how best to ensure the co-ordinated production of election data in a manner and to a timescale which will be both manageable for ROs and also welcomed by stakeholders.
	MOCK COUNTS – SEPTEMBER 2016
	• Council election teams are invited to take part in the 'Mock Count' sessions, which take place in September at the Dewars Centre in Perth.
	• Over the past few months, Dougie McGregor has been in touch with you all to help agree your attendance at the Mock Counts. In summary:
	– 3 councils have chosen to conduct a full, at-scale, Mock Count.
	– 15 councils have chosen to participate at a Mock Count, with other councils.
	– 10 councils have chosen to observe counts taking place.
	• We will shortly write out to you all with the daily programme for the Mock Count sessions and provide further details of the location, travel options, parking and other logistics. Any queries in the meantime, please drop an email to one of the Project Team (details below).
	• Prior to the first Mock Count days, in w/c 5 September, the Project Team and technical support personnel will be conducting a large scale 'Bulk' test and also a 'Disaster Recovery' exercise, to further test the robustness and integrity of the e-counting system. Council election staff (including your own technical people) would be welcome to come along in that week if you wish to witness/ participate in these exercises.
	• In addition, we would welcome your technical/ facilities personnel if they wish to come along in w/c 29 August to witness the system set-up and configuration work, if they would find it helpful to see this.
	• **PLEASE CONTACT THE PROJECT TEAM IF YOU WANT ANY FURTHER DETAILS.**

SERVICE CONTRACTS

- While the primary e-counting contact ('Framework Agreement') was signed between the Scottish Government and our supplier, CGI IT UK Ltd, shortly after the Mock Count events, each council will need to sign a 'Service Contract' with CGI for the delivery of e-counting in the May 2017 elections. CGI are keen to get these Contracts in place promptly to give them sufficient time to order the necessary equipment (scanners etc) much of which will be made to order.

- The Service Contract is set out in a schedule of the main Framework Agreement and therefore the broader terms and conditions are already fixed. Your main interest, however, will no doubt be the items particular to your own count and these details can be agreed between each council and CGI just after the Perth sessions are complete.

- Heather McCauley, chair of the Project Board, will be writing out to all ROs shortly on the subject of the Service Contracts.

ONLINE PORTAL

- As previously advised, the online e-counting information 'Portal' is now up-and-running. While it is still a bit of a work in progress, as things progress, the Portal will provide access to project documents and up-to-date information as well as advice and training materials.

- Each councils has their own log-in details. If you are having any trouble logging in, or indeed if you want to raise any issues or have questions about the Portal, you can do this through the following email address: ecountingsupport@cgi.com

For more information please contact a member of the <u>e-counting Project Team</u>:

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