

Council

Developments in Elections and Electoral Registration

16 May 2012

Report of Chief Executive (as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the programme of elections to 2015, changes in electoral registration and the annual canvass and to seek delegated power for the Returning Officer to amend the Elections Fees and Charges schedule as a required in light of these developments.

This report is public

Recommendations

Council is recommended:

- (1) To note the growth in the electoral and electoral registration programme to 2015 and request that Council receives future reports as appropriate.
- (2) To give delegated authority to the Returning Officer to amend the elections fees and charges schedule in order to address operational requirements as required.

Details

Within the past two years there has been much discussion regarding the changes to elections and electoral registration as a result of government legislation including the Localism Act. These initiatives include elected Police and Crime Commissioners, an elected House of Lords, individual electoral registration, annual postal vote refresh, potential European referenda, neighbourhood planning and council tax referenda.

The Elections and Electoral Registration programme to 2015 is set out below:

2012

May – District and Parish elections CDC
May – Brackley Town Council By-election SNC
June – Northamptonshire County Boundary Review Proposals
June – Jul 2012 Community Governance Review CDC
July – Oct - Annual Canvass SNC & CDC
Nov - Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Northamptonshire and Thames Valley)

2013

Jan – Postal Vote refresh SNC & CDC
May – County Council elections SNC & CDC
Oct – Mar 2014 Individual Electoral Registration SNC & CDC

2014

Jan – Postal Vote refresh SNC & CDC
June – European Elections, District and Parish elections CDC

2015

Jan – Postal Vote refresh SNC & CDC
Early May – House of Commons, House of Lords and District elections SNC & CDC
Late May – Parish elections SNC & CDC
Aug – Sep – Individual electoral registration annual canvass

Additionally there could be by-elections, council tax polls, parish polls and neighbourhood planning referenda could be called at any time.

The government's programme for elections and electoral registration between now and 2015 is ambitious and involves several large scale projects with new legislation. For instance the Police and Crime Commissioner elections are being conducted in November using the supplementary vote system, at a time of year when inclement weather is not uncommon, similarly individual electoral registration will require the canvassing of individuals as opposed to households and obtaining signatures and national insurance numbers, resulting in increased administration, cost and complexity. Whilst external elections and individual electoral registration will be in part externally funded they will also have ongoing resource implications for the council. Work is currently taking place to quantify this resource and will be reported as part of the annual budget setting process.

With the creation of a shared management team and a shared democratic and elections team, there has also been a net reduction in the number of posts who have traditionally carried out election duties. Given this, I (in my capacity as Electoral Registration Officer and

Returning Officer) have been reviewing the operational aspects of these activities in light of shared arrangements and the challenges posed by the electoral and electoral registration programme. Whilst this review is ongoing (and it is likely that further reports will be brought to Council), in the interim it has been identified that due to the combined count in Northamptonshire and the devolved count in Thames Valley for November 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections there is a need for me to have ongoing operational flexibility within agreed budgets that appropriate staffing resources can be deployed to meet these requirements, which are not currently provided for in the schedule of elections fees and charges. Therefore it is recommended that I be given delegated authority to amend the elections fees and charges schedule in order to address these operational requirements.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

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|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Option One | Accept the recommendations as drafted |
| Option Two | Amend the recommendations |
| Option Three | Reject the recommendations |

Implications

Financial: Financial implications have been set out above as far as they are known at this stage and will be the subject of further reports when resources have been quantified.

Comments checked by Sarah Best, Service Accountant, 01295 221982

Legal: Carrying out elections and electoral registration are statutory responsibilities of the authority and the Council has a duty to provide adequate resources and assistance to the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, and Elections Manager 01295 221587

Risk Management: There are reputational, legal and financial risks to the

authority in not providing adequate resources to address the new developments in elections and electoral registration. This report and future reports will seek to mitigate these risks.

Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager 01295 22158

Wards Affected

All

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
None	
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