

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	Follow up to Election Committee meeting 18 October 2010	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 3
Ward	All	
Contributors	Head of Law	
Class	Part 1	Date: 3 February 2011

1. Purpose

- 1.1 A number of actions and proposals arose out of the Election Committee meeting on the 18 October 2010.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the responses to these actions and proposals to date.

3. Background

This report deals with each of the reports submitted at the meeting on the 18 October 2010 using the same headings and in the same order.

4. The Electoral Agenda: the next five years.

- 4.1 As requested by the Elections committee a copy of the above report was sent to the Mayor and Cabinet on 19th January 2011 where its contents were noted and agreement given that the Elections Committee be consulted on all matters related to electoral changes, especially on boundary changes.
- 4.2 At the time of compiling this report, the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill (PVSC) has yet to receive Royal Assent, although planning is on the basis that it will receive such assent and that a referendum on the Alternative Voting System (AVS) will take place on the 5 May 2011
- 4.3 The PVSC needs to gain Royal Assent by 16 February 2011, to allow for the minimum 10-week referendum campaign period as set out in the Political Parties, Referendums and Elections Act 2000 (PPREA).

- 4.4 Two consultation documents have been issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission on policies and procedures for Principal Areas boundary reviews and for electoral reviews respectively. These mainly concern the process to be used in assessing requirements. The Boundary Commission for England which is the body responsible for the conduct of parliamentary reviews (and whose funding and sponsorship has moved from the Ministry of Justice to the Cabinet Office) has yet to issue any guidance on the reforms proposed in the PVSC.
- 4.5 The position therefore remains as reported on the 18 October 2010 in that, subject to passage of the Act, the Boundary Commission for England will have to conclude a national review by September 2013 on boundary equalisation reducing the number of constituencies from 650 to 600.
- 4.6 Notwithstanding the issue of Royal Assent, the London Borough of Lewisham's (LBL's) planning is well advanced in accordance with Electoral Commission (EC) directions. The EC, under the terms of PPREA, have responsibility for running the referendum and have powers of direction. They wish to ensure that the referendum is run on a uniform basis across the country and that local authorities make sufficient resources to run it effectively. To this end they have mandated amongst other things
- 4.7.1 A continuous performance reporting regime
- 4.7.2 Deviation from directions to be reported and assented to by the Regional Counting Officer, Barry Quirk for London and ultimately the Chief Counting Officer – Jenny Watson, Chair of the EC
- 4.7.3 Project and risk plans to be submitted at various times in the lead up to the referenda for assessment.
- 4.7.4 Adherence to statutory timetable and other criteria and events detailed by the EC.
- 4.7.5 As part of their directions the EC has mandated that the verification of the poll for the referendum should finish no later than 1pm on Friday 6 May and that the count should not commence before 4pm on the same day. We are proposing to use Forest Hill School as the count venue.
- 4.7.6 The EC have also directed minimum staffing requirements for polling stations as follows.

Voters in Person	Polling Station Staff
0-1000	1 Presiding Officer, 1 Poll Clerk
1001-1750	1 Presiding Officer, 2 Poll Clerks
1751-2500	1 Presiding Officer, 3 Poll Clerks

LBL does not exceed any of these limits and LBL will probably put a minimum of two poll clerks in each polling station. LBL have yet to see the charges order which details the amount of funding to be received from HM Treasury to run these elections.

The electorate eligible to vote at the referendum will be LBL's parliamentary electorate.

- 4.8 The EC will be responsible for mailing to households details of the referendum. The "Yes" and "No" vote campaigns will be providing additional information. A meeting has been held with LBL's communication team that will in the main use EC resources, customised for LBL purposes, to optimise the use of the small outreach budget that Electoral services has. There is no direct funding from Government for these activities.
- 4.9 With regard to the other topics covered in the report the Electoral Services Manager has attended two briefings by the Cabinet Office on Individual Elector Registration. The focus was on the efficacy and evaluation of data matching. However a number of other points were made that should be noted.
 - 4.9.1 There is no support for anything involving the centralisation of registration activities or anything that could be viewed as a National Identity Scheme.
 - 4.9.2 Funding for IER would be via the revenue support grant but not ring fenced Investment in IER would take place before 2014/2015 but any potential saves would come after this date.
 - 4.9.3 IER is giving rise to wider debates about the use of the register and the continuing publication of the edited register and the full register by licensed credit reference agencies.
 - 4.9.4 The Cabinet Office currently do not propose any measures to make it compulsory to register.
 - 4.9.5 Considerable focus is being placed on the EC's role in the forthcoming referendum and this is likely to inform the debate about whether electoral services should continue to be provided from within local authorities.
 - 4.9.6 Whilst all non responding electors will be rolled over at the end of 2014 to include them in the 2015 Parliamentary election, postal and proxy voters will have to have provided IER identifiers.
 - 4.9.7 There is considerable debate about the need to continue an annual canvass, with arguments being put forward about registering once and remaining on the register for the foreseeable future. This gives rise to further debate about the integrity of the registers.

4.9.8 Concern was expressed about the DCLG's work on proposals for Council Tax referenda, and other local referendums included in the Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

5 Canvass 2010

- 5.7 The Election Committee asked for an update to the report submitted to it on the 18 October 2010.
- 5.8 Our canvass concluded with the publication of the revised register on 1 December 2010. The overall canvass response for LBL for 2010/2011 was 95% compared to 92% for 2009/10
- 5.9 Electorate numbers grew for all categories of electors as demonstrated in the tables below.

Please note that the electorate numbers do not include the parliamentary electors in the Lewisham West and Penge Constituency that are on the London Borough of Bromley's register in the three wards of Clock House, Crystal Palace and Penge and Cator

	Canvass 2010/11		
	Local Government	Parliamentary	European
Deptford	74,005	67,589	6,492
East	69,477	65,508	4,022
West & Penge	41,377	38,770	2,635
	184,859	171,867	13,149

	Canvass 2009/10		
	Local Government	Parliamentary	European
Deptford	70,759	64,809	5,986
East	68,764	64,937	3,850
West & Penge	40,636	38,167	2,476
	180,159	167,913	12,312

5.10 Parliamentary elector numbers by ward are given below

Constituency	Ward	Parliamentary Electors	
		2010/11	2009/10
Lewisham Deptford	Brockley	10555	10205
Lewisham Deptford	Crofton Park	9743	9477
Lewisham Deptford	Evelyn	9193	8649
Lewisham Deptford	Ladywell	8778	8535
Lewisham Deptford	Lewisham Central	10222	9795
Lewisham Deptford	New Cross	9236	8717
Lewisham Deptford	Telegraph Hill	9862	9431
Lewisham East	Blackheath	9235	8938
Lewisham East	Catford South	9858	9815
Lewisham East	Downham	9507	9505
Lewisham East	Grove Park	9761	9948
Lewisham East	Lee Green	9559	9536
Lewisham East	Rushey Green	8530	8362
Lewisham East	Whitefoot	9058	8833
Lewisham West and Penge	Bellingham	9262	9115
Lewisham West and Penge	Forest Hill	9462	9402
Lewisham West and Penge	Perry Vale	9858	9614
Lewisham West and Penge	Sydenham	10188	10036
		171867	167913

5.11 Electorate numbers since 2000 are given below

Year	Local Government Electors	Parliamentary Electors	European Electors
Dec-00	180428	176879	3626
Dec-01	180012	175793	4271
Dec-02	182035	177526	4554
Dec-03	171968	167205	4809
Dec-04	179584	173699	5990
Dec-05	179275	172479	6892
Dec-06	179756	171872	7949
Dec-07	180931	171750	9250

Dec-08	181805	170373	11504
Dec-09	180159	167913	12315
Dec-10	184859	171867	13149

6 Review of the Parliamentary, Mayoral and Local Elections in May 2010”

6.7 The committee agreed a number of proposals following its review of the report

6.8 *Proposal 2: “The Director of Programme Management & Property to look again at the issue of data management.”*

6.8.1 The issue of data management is critical to compiling registers and running elections. There are however some underlying principles which need to be considered when discussing this issue.

6.8.2 The data held in respect of registration and elections is the property of the Electoral Registration Officer and the Returning Officer respectively.

6.8.3 The ERO/RO is required by law to provide data to those people and organisations entitled to receive it in either in paper or data format in a form in which the ERO|RO holds it.

6.8.4 LBL’s electoral registration and election management system is a proprietary system provided by Express, a company that provides these services to over 130 other local authorities

6.8.5 The system can provide data in a number of specified formats including CSV and Tab delimited and the reports on the system vary dependent on who generates them and what part of the system they are generated from. The legal requirements are that those entitled to receive such information must request it in writing stating whether they require data or paper format. Part of the issue will be overcome by users familiarity with the system and requestors specifying in what format the data is required. In most cases the default setting in the system is CSV.

6.8.6 The committee is asked to note that Express complies with NPLG address formatting requirements and is also EML compliant. However there is some doubt about the future of EML following the demise of the CORE initiative and it’s replacement by IER and the whole debate about centralised databases and data matching.

6.9 *Proposal 3: Polling Station signage to be reviewed in order to improve current status*

6.9.1 Electoral services have reviewed 20 polling stations since the May 2010 elections focussing on feedback received from Presiding Officers and other stakeholders. In general we have more than sufficient signage to cover all eventualities. However we are reinvesting in estate boards as the old boards were not fit for purpose. We are currently waiting on a live mock up before signing off on them.

6.10 *Proposal 4: Review postal vote opening process in relation to recovering rejected ballot papers. Find ways to redress and reduce the large number of spoilt Mayoral Ballot papers.*

6.10.1 The opportunity was taken to revise and test a modification to system whereby all three opening baskets are kept together from the initial opening to the scanning and ultimately rejection process. This means that the basket containing the ballot papers goes through the process with the rejected papers not necessarily having to go back to the same team that opened them. This means that the opening team, once they have dealt with one bundle (normally 50 envelopes) can pass these on to scanning and immediately process the next bundle of 50. For larger elections we are exploring the possibility of having a dedicated team remove the rejections before being returned for reconciliation and Inclusion for the count.

7 **Legal Implications**

These are reflected in the body of the report

8. **Other implications**

There are no specific financial, environmental, or crime and disorder implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Elections Committee minutes (18.10.10)

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Malcolm Constable, Electoral Services Manager (0208 314 6907).