

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO:</b> Joint Audit and Standards Committee	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> <b>JAC/23/08</b>
<b>FROM:</b> The Returning Officer	<b>DATE OF MEETINGS:</b> 25 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>OFFICER:</b> Arthur Charvonia, Chief Executive	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> N/A

### REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF THE 2023 DISTRICT, TOWN & PARISH ELECTIONS

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 Following a review of the delivery of the 2023 district, town, and parish elections. Council have requested that the Joint Audit and Standards Committee consider the draft action plan that has been formulated following those reviews and make any comments or observations on the actions within the plan. The draft action plan is attached at Appendix C.

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 There are no alternative options to consider. Council have requested that Joint Audit and Standards review the draft action plan.

#### 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To note the content of the draft action plan and consider any actions that may need to be taken following review of the plan.

#### REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that improved procedures are in place ahead of the next scheduled elections and the further changes in electoral legislation.

#### 4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 As a result of a number of particular issues that arose during delivery of the 2023 district, town, and parish elections across Babergh and Mid Suffolk the Returning Officer commissioned the Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) to conduct an external post-election review. The outcome of the review is attached at Appendix A.
- 4.2 After each election the Council's Electoral Services Team conduct an internal 'wash up' of the process in order to learn lessons and make improvements, as a result of the particular issues that arose delivering the 2023 election this process was expanded. The outcome of the broader review is attached at Appendix B.

The summary of the external review was that "despite the challenges, safe and secure elections were delivered. There were no inherent failings in the delivery of elections in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. However, there were clearly areas that required

improvement. The external and internal reviews that were conducted independently of each other identified that the following improvements need to be made to the following processes.

- Nominations and notices
- IT
- Communication with candidates & agents and internal engagement
- Corporate support
- Project planning
- Resource
- Team development
- Ongoing corporate learning
- Access to physical space

4.3 An action plan has been developed in response to the reviews. The action plan has been divided into three sections as recommended in the reviews,

- i) Lessons learned from the delivery of the district, town and parish elections which need to be captured, implemented, and embedded where possible now, in recognition that this particular set of elections and scale of nominations will not take place again until 2027.
- ii) Lessons learned and improvements that will relate to all types of elections but particularly ahead of the next scheduled elections – Police & Crime Commissioner (May 2024) and the General Election (before January 2025).
- iii) Implementation of the changes needed in response to the further changes in electoral law.

4.4 The Joint Audit & Standards Committee is asked to consider and comment on the draft action plan.

## **5. FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 The draft action plan will include a review of the Election Project Team's risk register and Election Service's risk register.

## **7. CONSULTATIONS**

7.1 The Returning Officer, the Electoral Commission and Corporate Election Project Team have been consulted.

## **8. EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

There are likely to be equality impact implications arising from the action plan which will need to be assessed on an individual basis as they arise.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no environmental impacts arising from the recommendations in this report.

## **10. APPENDICES**

Title	Location
(A) Post-election review of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Electoral Services – May 2023 - The Association of Electoral Administrators	Attached
(B) Elections Internal Review	Attached
(C) Action Plan	Attached

## **11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

11.1 [Performance standards for Returning Officers | Electoral Commission](#)