

## Elections Review Action Plan

Recommendation	Start Date	Progress	Status
<b>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.</b>			
We need to ensure effective project management, and that key elections processes are run effectively.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Draft a comprehensive and robust elections team plan with key milestones, actions, dates, and responsibilities that can be used by the Elections and wider project team. Ensure it is drafted well ahead of the next election so it may be refined iteratively.	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing
Map the changes in elections legislation to ensure that we are fully prepared for the next election and have appropriate communication and support in relation to this.	Commenced	Key officers attending training on new legislation, key dates and milestones to be incorporated into election plan	Ongoing
Process map the key election processes (e.g. nominations process, postal vote processing) to ensure that the Elections team and related teams understand the processes, steps and what needs to be done at each stage.	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing
Plan and conduct a 'test' election well before the next election period, to ensure business continuity and that processes and plans are robust.	Commenced	Training being undertaken with democracy counts to have test plan up and tested before end of December	Ongoing
Create a comprehensive risk register, capturing all potential risks and issues faced, ensuring they have all been properly documented and that appropriate mitigations have been identified and implemented as a tool to proactively manage the project.	Commenced	Current risk register being reviewed	Ongoing
Create a comprehensive communications plan that spans the lifecycle of the elections process to provide a view of ongoing activities to help with the smooth running of future elections. Ensure that communications are informative and consistent and are given to appropriate stakeholders at the right time.	Not started		Not Started
Review key stakeholder groups, both internal and external, and ensure that all stakeholders are captured within the communications plan.	Commenced	Discussion with County Joint Emergency Planning Unit representative to join the CEPT	Not Started
Communications should be sent after this election review to those who worked in the latest local elections, thanking them for their feedback and hard work. This is to ensure recognition of efforts and that an appropriate number of staff will volunteer again to work in the next election period.	Completed	Staff contacted and thanked and requested to indicate if they wanted to work at the next election	Completed
Communication of this review (together with the external review commissioned from the AEA) and the actions being taken, should be sent to all key stakeholders.	Commenced	Regular communication with Eastern Electoral Commissioner and AEA member support	Ongoing
Complete a polling station review to ensure that all venues chosen are appropriate in terms of accessibility. Work with our partner groups, such as the Disability Forum and the Shaw Trust, who could support with this. This will help us to ensure venues are appropriate and we are aware of any additional resources that may be required (e.g. lighting, coins for meters or poor phone signal).	Not started	Polling District Review needs to be started before December 2023	Not Started
Work with existing Presiding Officers to create short information packs for each polling station to help Presiding Officers set up, and to provide key information that may need to be known about each location.	Not started		Not Started
Review staff numbers required for each election process (e.g. nominations, count) and ensure a robust recruitment plan is drafted ahead of the election period.	Not started		Not Started
Ensure appropriate allocation of staff to each polling station; try to ensure more experienced staff are assigned to larger or busier stations, and that the number of poll staff is appropriate for each location.	Not started		Not Started

Review the online training available to staff ahead of the elections to ensure that any additional training materials can be planned out and documented.	Not started		Not Started
Create a training plan ahead of the next election, explore the possibility to add in-person or specific training to first-time presiding officers, poll clerks, count supervisors or those who may need additional support.	Not started		Not Started
Create a training and development plan to support the ongoing development of the Elections team, perhaps with the offer of external mentors and support to share best practice.	Commenced	Training has been undertaken with democracy counts and AEA. Team have visited ESDC and will attend User Group. Further ongoing training is planned	Ongoing
Training and development of all support staff including Customer Operations to ensure that more demand can be resolved at the first point of contact.	Commenced	Initial meeting held with Assistant Manager for Customers for help from the Team	Ongoing
Review the issues experienced with the elections system and ensure these are raised and resolved ahead of the next election.	Commenced	Regular fortnightly meetings have been set up with democracy counts to review issues with system. Client meetings have also been set up	Ongoing
Create a training plan for those that need to utilise the system to ensure appropriate levels of skill and confidence.	Commenced	Training has been undertaken with democracy counts and AEA. Team have visited ESDC and will attend User Group. Further ongoing training is planned	Ongoing
Using feedback from those involved with nominations, look to improve upon the appointment booking system to ensure that it works as well as possible for the team.	Not started		Not Started
In-depth training of the staff appointed by the RO to input nominations into the EMS. It is essential they fully understand how the EMS input process works, how the data entry screens are arranged, and the precise data that needs to be entered. It is also essential those staff are aware of when the data must be saved.	Not started		Not Started
To help ensure information is entered completely and accurately, checklists should be provided and used when inputting all nominations into the EMS system.	Not started		Not Started
Every nomination should be physically date and time stamped on receipt so that evidence is available should it be required (as was the case in one incident at this election). Too much reliance was given to the EMS recording that information.	Completed	All nominations now date stamped when received	Completed
It was reported the EMS processing time was slow and contributed towards some of the inputting errors that transpired. This issue should be taken up with the EMS supplier to seek a solution, with the technical support of the Corporate IT team.	Ongoing	Regular fortnightly meetings have been set up with democracy counts to review issues with system. Client meetings have also been set up	Ongoing
Data inputting should be checked for accuracy on an ongoing daily basis. This will help with identifying common errors or issues of concern, and with the timely production of the various notices required following the close of nominations.	Not started		Not Started
In all instances, data should be checked by reference to the source documentation, for example the physical nomination paper. Ideally, it should be done by individuals not involved in the inputting process, by reference to checklists developed for the specific tasks, for example the checking of ballot papers should include specifically checking the number of candidates for whom electors may vote.	Not started		Not Started
The system for the filing of the physical nomination papers must be organised, clear and simple. It is essential the papers can be found easily so that the checking and validation processes can proceed efficiently. Consideration could be given to sub-dividing the filing system into the two sovereign district areas, sub-dividing again into parishes within those areas, and then delegating responsibility for the four areas to individual officers.	Not started		Not Started
With the support of the corporate IT team, discussions should be had with Democracy Counts in respect of the individual issues faced at these elections. It is essential the users of the system have confidence in its operation	Commenced	Regular fortnightly meetings have been set up with democracy counts to review issues with system. Client meetings have also been set up	Ongoing

Every user of the system should receive the necessary training in its operation in respect of their areas of responsibility. We formed the view that some of the issues experienced may have been because of lack of understanding of the processes to be followed within the system.	Commenced	Training has been undertaken with democracy counts and AEA. Team have visited ESDC and will attend User Group. Further ongoing training is planned	Ongoing
At future elections, the system should be set up and tested much earlier than was the case on this occasion. We recognise there may have been issues preventing an earlier set up at these elections, but that contributed to the challenges faced. The corporate IT team should be fully involved in assisting where necessary.	Commenced	Training being undertaken with democracy counts to have test plan up and tested before end of December	Ongoing
The method for the reporting and escalation of issues, primarily to Democracy Counts, should be reviewed by the Electoral Services and corporate IT teams to improve effectiveness and resolution time.	Ongoing	Regular fortnightly meetings have been set up with democracy counts to review issues with system. Client meetings have also been set up	Ongoing
There is an opportunity at the casual vacancy elections in June to set up the election and use the system in less pressurised and overwhelming circumstances. This could enable procedures to be learned and recorded more effectively. Any issues can be reported and resolved with the software company to the benefit of future elections.	Commenced	Training being undertaken with democracy counts to have test plan up and tested before end of December	Ongoing
The development of a communications plan for future elections, detailing how candidates and agents will be given information before, during and after elections. This should be part of a wider public awareness plan to encourage participation.	Not started		Not Started
Identifying methods of communication to reach and inform as many candidates as possible, bearing in mind the geographical area of the two districts.	Not started		Not Started
A strategy for communicating clear information in the event of issues or errors, aiming to be proactive and transparent, and setting the narrative, should be developed.	Not started		Not Started
Identifying staff during the election process, and at the count, as points of contact for candidates and agents. Clear lines and examples of answers for common questions should be provided.	Not started		Not Started
The Declarations of Result for the contested parishes should be re-published so that unused votes are not incorrectly classified as "rejected in part", but as unused votes.	Completed	All results have now been republished	Completed
A thorough review of the challenges faced by the Electoral Services team in the delivery of these elections, identifying what resources and support will be required to mitigate risk in future.	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing
Questioning which aspects of the election process could be delivered by staff other than the core Electoral Services team. For example, recruitment of polling station staff, handling elector enquiries, proof-checking election materials, preparing ballot boxes and stationery, etc.	Not started		Not Started
Recognising that elections are much bigger than the business-as-usual processes of the Electoral Services team, and engendering a "one council" approach to their delivery and success within the extended leadership team.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Recognising that examples of positive support and collaboration exist and building on existing experience and expertise at future elections	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Encouraging and valuing the input of the core Electoral Services team and supporting services in the development of election and registration plans.	Commenced		Ongoing
To support the high-level project plan, and with the input of the core Electoral Services team and other supporting services, a more detailed delivery plan for future elections should be drafted that identifies key tasks at a more granular level.	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing

Ensure project team meetings continue to take place well in advance of scheduled elections, recognising that planning starts with the review of the previous election, and that they provide an opportunity to check and monitor progress effectively.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Consider having the oversight of the project plan managed by someone other than the ESM.	Not started		Not Started
The development of operational plans, process notes and checklists for all aspects of the delivery of an election, including (but not limited to): • Setting up an election in the EMS • Booking and equipping polling stations • Recruiting and training staff • Processing nominations • Producing notices and election materials • Operation of postal vote opening • Ballot box preparation • Management of the count	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Development of an electoral registration plan covering the timescales, tasks and deliverables for the annual canvass as well as plans for identifying new potential electors and maintaining the register throughout the year.	Commenced		Ongoing
Seeking out good practice from other authorities.	Commenced	Elections Team have visited East Suffolk DC and will attend AEA branch meetings, Demcoracy count user groups	Ongoing
Engendering a collaborative and team spirit culture, undertaking work to build the core team, developing the individual and collective strengths that are apparent and addressing those areas where issues prevent optimum team working.	Commenced	Away day held and regular 121's put in place. Process commenced for appointing a new Elecotral Services Manager.	Ongoing
Seeking out development opportunities to build the core technical skills, including attending elections training courses, software training, shadowing other electoral services teams, etc.	Commenced	Elections Team have visited East Suffolk DC and will attend AEA branch meetings, Demcoracy count user groups	Ongoing
Involving the team in the development of operational plans and process notes (see also the project planning section).	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing
Having regular opportunities to share knowledge, new processes and guidance at team meetings, etc.	Commenced	Elections Team have visited East Suffolk DC and will attend AEA branch meetings, Demcoracy count user groups	Ongoing
Encouraging individual team members to visit other local authorities to help understand how best to develop processes that will be of benefit to the electors of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.	Commenced	Elections Team have visited East Suffolk DC and will attend AEA branch meetings, Demcoracy count user groups	Ongoing
Benchmarking with other local authorities to test if the structure remains appropriate, and to build on good practice already developed elsewhere.	Commenced	Elections Team have visited East Suffolk DC and will attend AEA branch meetings, Demcoracy count user groups	Ongoing
<b>Lessons learned and improvements that will relate to all types of elections but particularly ahead of the next scheduled elections – Police &amp; Crime Commissioner (May 2024) and the General Election (before January 2025).</b>			
Draft a comprehensive and robust elections team plan with key milestones, actions, dates, and responsibilities that can be used by the Elections and wider project team. Ensure it is drafted well ahead of the next election so it may be refined iteratively.	Commenced	Elections Team Away day key tasks and actions identified for drafting of project plan	Ongoing
Plan and conduct a 'test' election well before the next election period, to ensure business continuity and that processes and plans are robust.	Commenced	Training being undertaken with democracy counts to have test plan up and tested before end of December	Ongoing
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In-depth training of the staff appointed by the RO to input nominations into the EMS. It is essential they fully understand how the EMS input process works, how the data entry screens are arranged, and the precise data that needs to be entered. It is also essential those staff are aware of when the data must be saved.	Not started		Not Started

At future elections, the system should be set up and tested much earlier than was the case on this occasion. We recognise there may have been issues preventing an earlier set up at these elections, but that contributed to the challenges faced. The corporate IT team should be fully involved in assisting where necessary.	Commenced	Training being undertaken with democracy counts to have test plan up and tested before end of December	Ongoing
The development of a communications plan for future elections, detailing how candidates and agents will be given information before, during and after elections. This should be part of a wider public awareness plan to encourage participation.	Not started		Not Started
Identifying staff during the election process, and at the count, as points of contact for candidates and agents. Clear lines and examples of answers for common questions should be provided.	Not started		Not Started
Recognition of the forthcoming challenges in implementing Phase 2 of the Elections Act 2022 measures, implementing parliamentary boundary changes, preparing for the UK parliamentary general election (at potentially 25 working days' notice), and preparing for the scheduled PCC polls in 2024 and Suffolk County Council polls in 2025.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
To support the high-level project plan, and with the input of the core Electoral Services team and other supporting services, a more detailed delivery plan for future elections should be drafted that identifies key tasks at a more granular level.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
Ensure project team meetings continue to take place well in advance of scheduled elections, recognising that planning starts with the review of the previous election, and that they provide an opportunity to check and monitor progress effectively.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
A corporate project team be established to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact the phase one Elections Act 2022 measures (voter ID and accessibility) will have on future elections and referendums.</li> <li>• The impact the phase two measures (including online absent voting, the handling of postal ballot papers, EU citizens candidacy and voting rights and the changes to the overseas electors' franchise) are likely to have.</li> <li>• Early planning for the PCC (due May 2024), the UK Parliamentary general election (due before the end of January 2025), and Suffolk County Council elections (due May 2025).</li> <li>• The impact of the changes to the parliamentary constituency boundaries that will be reported to Parliament by 1 July 2023.</li> </ul>	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
We consider careful consideration should be given to attempting to resolve or mitigate the space challenge ahead of the PCC elections in May 2024.	Commenced	New venue identified with space for postal votes and ballot box packing	Ongoing
<b>Implementation of the changes needed in response to the further changes in electoral law.</b>			
A corporate project team be established to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact the phase one Elections Act 2022 measures (voter ID and accessibility) will have on future elections and referendums.</li> <li>• The impact the phase two measures (including online absent voting, the handling of postal ballot papers, EU citizens candidacy and voting rights and the changes to the overseas electors' franchise) are likely to have.</li> <li>• Early planning for the PCC (due May 2024), the UK Parliamentary general election (due before the end of January 2025), and Suffolk County Council elections (due May 2025).</li> <li>• The impact of the changes to the parliamentary constituency boundaries that will be reported to Parliament by 1 July 2023.</li> </ul>	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing
As a minimum, the ERO/RO, ESM and core Electoral Services team be encouraged to attend training and development on the Elections Act changes as they arise, and to share that knowledge with the extended leadership team and elected members of both councils.	Commenced	Training on the proposed changes being undertaken by key members of staff. Discussions already taking place with democracy counts.	Ongoing

Map the changes in elections legislation to ensure that we are fully prepared for the next election and have appropriate communication and support in relation to this.	Commenced	Training on the proposed changes being undertaken by key members of staff. Discussions already taking place with democracy counts.	Ongoing
Recognition of the forthcoming challenges in implementing Phase 2 of the Elections Act 2022 measures, implementing parliamentary boundary changes, preparing for the UK parliamentary general election (at potentially 25 working days' notice), and preparing for the scheduled PCC polls in 2024 and Suffolk County Council polls in 2025.	Commenced	Corporate Election Project Team ( CEPT) constituted and regular meeting dates in diary	Ongoing