

Election Action Plan May 2010

Reviewed May 2011

Issue	What action will we take	Financial implications	Who is responsible?	by when	status update
<p>JT Recommendation 1</p> <p>The process for conducting the verification stage of counts be reconsidered with a view to using a new system based on a secure and effective way of receiving ballot boxes and issuing those ballot boxes for verification without delay</p> <p>Issue: Thurrock's current practice of waiting for all Ballot boxes to come in before starting the verification process was very secure but contributed to the delay by 1 1/2 to 2 hours.</p>	<p>1. Arrange for five staff, able to carry ballot boxes, to account for ballot boxes as they are brought in by Presiding Officers in their cars so that they can be passed on to the count superintendent, who will pass ballot boxes to the count supervisor immediately for the verification process to start.</p>	None.	ES / DRO for Count Process	November / December 2010	No action – counting on Friday
	<p>2. In order to achieve this will need to have secure parking spaces so that ballot box accounting can be undertaken as soon as the cars arrive and so that ballot boxes can be passed on directly to supervisors and other material stored securely.</p>	May be significant depending on venue	ES / DRO for Count Process	Identify venue by August 2010	No action – counting on Friday
	<p>3. Presiding officers will be asked to be available either at the count venue or via mobile telephone for up to two hours so that any queries arising can be addressed to them.</p>	Likely	ES / DRO for Count Process	December 2010	No action – counting on Friday
	<p>4. All other material (ie not ballot boxes) will be stored in a secure place by the ballot box carriers and unused ballot papers to be counted.</p>	None	DRO for Count Process		No action – counting on Friday
<p>JT Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the instructions for count supervisors be reviewed to ensure that the count is conducted in strict accordance with the instructions and that the members of that team are given sufficient and appropriate authority to ensure that this is the case.</p> <p>Issue: the Count Supervisor did not manage the process well and did not</p>	<p>5. Employ senior staff (HoS or next level rather than experienced staff we use) to be count supervisors so that they have the authority to prevent interaction between count assistants and candidates and agents.</p>	None	DRO General / RO	November / December 2010	Staff reviewed & appt agreed by RO and TS- Feb 2011

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<p>prevent count agents influencing count staff to count several times adding a further 1 to 2 hours to the delay.</p>	<p>6. These staff to be identified and trained in advance of the election, further briefed and given written instructions once the election is declared and briefed again the day before the election in one group together with count superintendents as well as the central count team.</p>	None	DRO General / DRO for Count Process	<p>January 2011 End of April May 4th and 5th 2011</p>	<p>Jan 2011 = staff identified</p>
	<p>7. Written instructions will be given to the count supervisors, superintendents and central count team in advance and there will be flow charts of the process at the count venue (as had been prepared before the election which were not circulated due to shortage of time).</p>	None	DRO General	<p>April 2011 4th and 5th May 2011</p>	<p>Awaiting info from EC to inform instructions – Jan 2011</p>
<p>JT Recommendation 3 That a written note of the procedure to be followed at the count is provided to counting agents including an explanation of the duties and rights of those agents.</p> <p>Issue: Although written notes and flow charts were prepared the DRO did not have sufficient time to finalise them and have copies available at the count venue. This is likely to have contributed to the delay.</p>	<p>8. Written notes to be prepared in advance and given to count agents at briefings, but also on the night as they arrive.</p>	None	DRO General	<p>April and 6th May 2011</p>	
	<p>9. Procedure notes given to count agents will be given to count supervisors so that they are aware of the rights and duties of agents and candidates</p>	None	DRO General	<p>During training of staff</p>	
	<p>10. That all staff employed at the count should be provided with written instructions with copies being available at the count (See action 7 above).</p>	None	DRO General	<p>April 4th and 5th May 2011</p>	
<p>JT Recommendation 4 That further consideration be given as to the appropriate venue for the count, particularly in terms of recommendations set out in above relating to receiving ballot</p>	<p>11. Visit new schools which may have sports halls, with the possibility of using those.</p>	Likely	DRO General / RO	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>Venues viewed, non suitable – July 2010</p>

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<p>boxes and issuing those ballot boxes for verification without delay</p> <p>Issue: Not waiting for ballot all ballot boxes to come in before starting verification will speed up the count process. However, to make significant improvements we would need a larger count venue with outside space for Presiding Officers to drive in, unload the ballot boxes, for them to be accounted for and drive out</p>	<p>12. Visit and consider the Tilbury Port as another venue option.</p>	<p>Yes more than Civic Hall plus security.</p>	<p>DRO General / RO</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>Considered but booking restrictions imposed – not suitable at present</p>
	<p>13. If we need to stay with Civic Hall then we need to reconsider the layout and check whether it is possible for presiding officers five at a time to drive in and deposit ballot boxes and drive out in a secure manner so that the ballot boxes can be receipted and issued without delay. Also the area allowed for guests of candidates could be reduced further and the postal vote opening process could be moved to another part of the building</p>	<p>Likely for parking area to be lit and covered.</p>	<p>DRO General</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>Draft layout produced. GF to confirm Feb 2011</p>
	<p>14. Consider any other options, including the Culver Centre, that there are and make recommendations to the council.</p>	<p>Likely</p>	<p>DRO General / RO</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>Culver centre used as a contingency venue</p>
<p>JT Recommendation 5</p> <p>That the practice of using staff as count supervisors or counting assistant for over night counts who have also been employed at polling station on the day of poll be discontinued.</p>	<p>15. Staff working at polling stations will not be employed to work during the count unless the count takes place the following day.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>DRO General</p>	<p>December 2010</p>	<p>Agreed. Count will take place next day therefore no real impact</p>

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	16. More council staff will be required to assist, as we cannot necessarily recruit from the community.	None	DRO General / RO	December 2010	Ongoing
In addition to the recommendations made by the independent review the Returning Officer would make the following further recommendations.					
<p>TS Recommendation 6</p> <p><u>Staff capacity and resources</u></p> <p>Two additional Deputy Returning Officers should be appointed for postal votes and count process and significant additional council staff should be requisitioned to assist in the preparation.</p> <p>Issue: The Returning officer and the core Election Team were spread too thinly.</p> <p>The increases in postal vote applications, the late registration and telephone calls during the week and the day meant the core team did not have sufficient time to prepare the venue, provide written instructions and gather their thoughts on the night</p>	17. Two Deputy Returning Officers to be appointed: one to deal with Postal Votes (Martin Hone) and another to be in charge of the Count Process (Sean Clark).	None	RO	July 2010	Requirements changed due to counting on Friday. TS/ES/SC are DRO's, GF = RO
	18. There will be a rehearsal of the count process on 4 th May	Yes – additional £3600 approx. for venue and tables	DRO General / RO	4 th May 2011	Venue booked – rehearsal may be subject to Reg CO orders

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	<p>19. Implement a new system for dealing with telephone calls leading up to the Election Day.</p> <p>We need to establish a call centre triage system to deal with calls in the weeks leading up to the election, during the day of the election up to 9pm.</p> <p>Option 1: Three additional staff (Democratic Services) should be trained to check register and deal with queries.</p> <p>Option 2: Use call centre to do the above.</p> <p>Option 3: Use Council Tax staff to do the above, as they are familiar with the Express Election Software.</p>	<p>May be significant if Options 2 or 3 are used.</p>	<p>DRO General / RO</p>	<p>By September 2010 decide on option.</p>	<p>Dem Services to assist. Elec System in place, FAQ being processed, telephones to join hunt group</p>
	<p>20. To give effect to the above action a script should be prepared for the day for FAQs - we can do this now and should do so while the calls are fresh in our minds. More difficult questions can be referred to the Election Team. This will free up time for election staff to prepare for Election Day.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Election Team</p>	<p>July 2010</p>	<p>See above</p>
	<p>21. Additional staff to be identified to help set out count venue during the late morning with DRO or one of her staff with written list of what is needed at each table.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>DRO General / RO</p>	<p>March 2011</p>	<p>Helen Saward to manage</p>
	<p>22. A van to transport all material to count venue - written checklist for all material needed at count venue including screws and bolts etc so that nothing is missed out.</p>	<p>Unlikely</p>	<p>DRO General</p>	<p>January 2011</p>	<p>HS duty, but manage via Daren Spring?</p>

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<p>TS Recommendation 7 <u>Training</u></p> <p>There should be a review of the effectiveness of the training provided to Presiding Officers, Count Supervisors and the Central Count Team.</p> <p>Issue: The performance of staff was not good and there was a lack of coordination. There may be a number of reasons for this. One of the reasons may be that the training was not effective or joined up.</p>	23. We will review the effectiveness of our training of Presiding Officers. As part of this we will undertake a survey of the Presiding Officers.	Minimal	DRO General	June	
	24. Count Superintends, Count Supervisors and the Central Count Team to be trained together, so that there is clear understanding of the roles and better coordination. See further action no 6 above.	None	DRO General / RO	As above action 6	
	25. We should also review the performance of Presiding Officers, based on feedback from Inspectors and others.	None	DRO General	August 2010	Perf reviewed, staff suspended on system.
<p>TS Recommendation 8 <u>Security at the count</u></p> <p>We should use our own staff (Vertex) at the count venue.</p> <p>Issus: there were no significant issues and any intrusion was dealt with promptly.</p>	26. Everyone will need a visible badge displaying their status - including count staff.	None	DRO General	May 2011	HS to event manage
	27. We should employ Vertex Staff we know at the count venue so that it is easier to liaise with them.	Unknown	DRO General / RO	September 2010	HS to event manage – may be difficult to achieve
<p>TS Recommendation 9 <u>Event Management and Communication</u></p> <p>The event management role should be taken on completely by the Communication Team working with the Election Team.</p>	28. The task of event management should be taken on by the Communications Team. Event management should include provision of badges, reception duty, announcements and contact person for candidates and agents. It would include sending out letters to guests etc.	Unknown	Head of Comms	September 2010	HS to event manage – 1 st mtg held Jan 2011

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<p>Issue: There is a big task of event management and the workload of preparing letters, keeping lists of guests, preparing badges is an additional burden on the election team and needs to be shared.</p>	<p>29. Communications team to have an Election Communication Strategy. And help with advance messaging to residents about registering (ie they are not registered unless they have confirmation from us) and about voting early in the day not at 9pm all at once, as may have happened elsewhere in the England.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Head of Comms</p>	<p>January 2011</p>	<p>Elec C to issue campaign. PM to devise strategy. 1st mtg Jan 2011</p>
<p>TS Recommendation 10 <u>General</u> We should prepare for increased turnout and continue to learn from other authorities.</p> <p>Issue: there were referrals about queues at two polling stations, which were dealt with. With additional funding we could purchase more polling booths.</p>	<p>30. We will ask Inspectors to check if any polling stations had overly long queues and address issues for the future. However, some queues are to be expected and cannot get rid of queues.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>DRO General</p>	<p>June 2010</p>	<p>No adverse feedback on queues</p>
	<p>31. Make provision for additional polling booths – extra 30 to 50 booths</p>	<p>30 = £7,770 50 = £12,450</p>	<p>DRO General</p>	<p>If funding available anytime</p>	<p>Quotes requested Feb 2011</p>
	<p>32. We will visit other Councils with similar numbers of electorates, which have consistently been fast at producing results.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>DRO General / RO</p>	<p>May August</p>	<p>Completed July 2010 and lessons incorporated.</p>

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