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To: Electoral and Boundary Review Committee – 2 February 2017

Subject: Kent County Council Election – 4 May 2017

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary This report updates Members on the work being undertaken with the Borough and District Councils in Kent to plan for the County Council election in May 2017.

1. Introduction

- (1) The County Returning Officer (CRO) and his staff have continued to work closely with Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers in the 12 District Councils in relation to planning and co-ordinating the County Council Election to be held on Thursday 4 May 2017.
- (2) Draft copies of the KCC Elections Project Plan, Risk Register, Guidance and Directions have been shared with the Deputy Returning Officers and will be discussed on 1 February as part of a project team meeting with the Electoral Services Managers.
- (3) The CRO has made a number of key decisions in relation to the planning and coordination of the election:

(a) The date of publication of the Notice of Election

The date of publication of the Notice of Election is Friday 24 March 2017 which is when the pre-election 'purdah' period will begin.

(b) Nominations

The nominations process, including the informal checking of nominations papers, will be delivered by the Deputy Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers in the 12 District Councils.

Nominations forms are to be delivered to the candidates' local district council offices from the date stated on the Notice of Election up until 4pm on Tuesday 4 April.

In light of the allegations of potential electoral fraud at the 2013 election, which is still subject to judicial proceedings, all nominations will be sent to KCC to check for duplications, prior to the publication of the Statement of Persons Nominated on Wednesday 5 April by 4pm. If duplicate nominations are identified, both nominations will not be validated.

The above measure will help to demonstrate how the CRO is meeting the following Electoral Commission's performance standards:

- (i) The development and implementation of robust project management processes
- (ii) Evaluation of the planning and delivery of previous polls and identification of lessons learnt
- (iii) Ensuring that candidates have the opportunity to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to their formal submission (Electoral Commission 2013)

(c) The start time for the verification and counting of the votes for the County Council Election

The CRO has requested that arrangements should be made in each Borough and District Council area for the County Council Election verification and the count to begin at 10am on Friday 5 May 2017.

Whilst the CRO was conscious of the eagerness of both elected Members and political parties for the election results to be announced as soon as possible after the close of poll, he was mindful of:

- (i) Those Councils with two-Member electoral divisions, which can take significantly longer to count than those Councils with all single divisions;
- (ii) The health, safety and welfare of key election staff, some of whom could be on duty for 24 hours or more if there was an overnight count; and
- (iii) The need for complete accuracy, which is enhanced by having fresh counting staff the following day.

4. Recommendation

The Committee is invited to note the progress made with regard to planning for the 2017 County Council elections and request the County Returning Officer provide a review of the 2017 County Council Elections in summer 2017

Background Documents

Electoral Commission (2013) *Performance standards for Returning Officers in Great Britain (01/11/2013)*,
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163821/New-performance-standards-for-ROs-November-2013.pdf

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