

	What worked well?	To be addressed	Key recommendations
1. Project planning			
	<p>The election planning was based on our existing election plan with amendments to incorporate lessons learned from previous elections, build on successful initiatives (receipt of ballot boxes and the processing of postal votes for example) and, crucially, the combination of 3 polls.</p>	<p>The combination of all-out Borough elections for the first time with new ward boundaries, the General Election with a high profile candidate and the addition of 35 parish polls, created an unprecedented workload and, inevitably, we have learned lessons and identified where improvements can be made.</p> <p>The Election Manager is crucial to the success of the election and we did miss not having an Election Manager that was familiar with our processes, local issues and the eXpress Election software.</p>	<p>Continue to refine and develop project plan to take account of lessons learned, particularly in relation to the key issues referred to below.</p> <p>Recruit to the vacant post of Electoral Services Manager</p>
2. Polling places/stations			
	<p>A statutory Polling Places and Stations Review was undertaken earlier this year. We left this as late as possible in order to conduct the review in the knowledge of the revised ward boundaries. For a number of factors, including the combination of the three polls, it was necessary to increase the number of polling stations from 158 utilised for the recent PCC Election, to 173. We also had an</p>	<p>Changing polling stations led to some confusion amongst the electorate and resulted in a high level of calls from Presiding Officers to the Inspectors and/or the Elections office on polling day in an attempt to identify the correct polling station for an individual voter. The number of calls generated by this issue did cause some disruption.</p>	<p>Feedback from the polling station Inspectors and polling staff on the suitability of individual polling stations will be assessed and inform any changes that may be required.</p> <p>Continue to look at alternatives to mobile polling stations and any options that will avoid closing schools for the day.</p> <p>If a polling station had changed, then this was highlighted on the polling card. However, there was still some confusion</p>

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	<p>increased number of double stations.</p> <p>We continued to look at ways of avoiding closing schools wherever possible. Similarly, we also looked to minimise the use of mobile polling stations, although there are currently no obvious solutions to reducing the 8 or so we have to utilise at the moment.</p>		<p>and further publicity may be required.</p> <p>We should also look to build a facility within the Council's website which will allow the electorate to identify their polling station by typing in their post code. Also need to explore what information we can give to polling station staff in order that they can quickly direct person to the correct polling station.</p>
3. Equipment and stationery			
	<p>The new light weight ballot boxes worked well. They are considerably lighter than some of the older metal ballot boxes and are easier to secure and store.</p>		<p>Update all of our stock of ballot boxes in this way when funds allow.</p>
4. Printers			
	<p>A very good service was provided by Adare. Adare liaise very closely with the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission and advise the Council in relation to any technical changes. Adare also offer significant savings on postal charges through the use of "Adare Post" which they have negotiated with Royal Mail.</p>		<p>Adare was appointed as the Council's election printer through the NEPO Framework Contract. That contract will expire shortly and is being re-procured by NEPO. The Council will be keen to appoint a printer that has the range of technical skills, customer care and value for money provided by the current supplier.</p>

5. Software performance			
	<p>The Council purchased eXpress software last year. eXpress is widely regarded as the leading system within the sector. The system is comprehensive and provides all of the tools for the management and delivery of an accurate and efficient process. The system also has functionality and capacity that we are not currently utilising.</p>	<p>Ensure that we make full use of the many functions available via the eXpress software.</p>	<p>Commission training and development for all relevant staff (and certainly not restrict it to the Elections Team given the key roles that were populated by colleagues from elsewhere within the Council) to ensure that the software is used to maximum effect.</p>
6. Effectiveness of other Council departments.			
	<p>Excellent support from throughout the Council. Elections are now properly regarded as a major corporate event with commensurate support from all directorates. ADs and other senior personnel are appointed as Deputy Returning Officers and discharge key roles. Other departments take responsibility for major aspects of the process utilising our own resources and specialisms as required. Examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the management and staffing of the team which received and allocated the 380 plus ballot boxes at the count venue 		<p>Continue to make full and appropriate use of all Council resources. Build on the success of this year's Council-wide working, particularly in the knowledge that 2017 will see all-out Council elections combined with the Mayoral Election.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handled many aspects of the preparation, management and equipping of the polling stations. - provided stand-by electricians, a locksmith and a mobile polling station for in the event of any problems with polling stations on the day - released staff throughout the organisation in the run up to the election, on election day and at the subsequent counts - provided cover for absent colleagues. 		
7. Recruitment and training			
	We trained approximately 440 staff ranging from Presiding Officers and polling station Inspectors, through to Senior Count Staff and others. One successful initiative was the facility which allowed staff to book training sessions on-line.	Feedback indicated a need for greater concentration during training on practical issues, including demonstrations.	Expand the practical component of the training sessions. Incorporate practical demonstrations to cover key areas such as close of poll and the correct completion of documentation. Revisit the training material in the light of experiences from this poll, particularly around the issues which resulted in avoidable telephone calls to the Elections office.
8. Processing/handling of queries			
	Excellent support from the Council's Contact Centre. However, that still	The Contact Centre was able to deal with a wider range of calls	Capture now the type of queries that could not be handled by the Contact Centre.

	left a huge volume of calls that were more involved and had to be dealt with by the Elections Team. At times, all of the Elections staff were engaged on calls and that did impact on the completion of other essential tasks.	as its staff had access to “WebReg”. Need to consider what further resources or training can be given to the Contact Centre for them to handle a greater proportion of calls.	Consider further specialist training for the Contact Centre staff, access to all key documentation and produce enhanced FAQs covering a wider range of queries. See also the reference above to the post code checker which would allow the electorate to identify their own polling station by simply inserting their own post code onto the Council’s website which potentially avoids the need for a significant number of telephone calls.
9. Resources			
	As set out elsewhere, we enjoyed wide-spread support throughout the Council. However, 3 combined polls with 547 nominations created an unprecedented level of work and commensurate demands on the Elections Team. The Elections Team and wider colleagues worked extremely hard to deliver the election in very difficult circumstances.	Ensure maximum use of technology and other resources to reduce the peaks created by the need for manual input.	Ensure eXpress is used to its full capacity. Eliminate hard copy correspondence and replace with e-mails where possible, for example, we sent approximately 1,800 letters out to candidates, agents and others. Could access to the Count be by bar codes or similar sent to smartphones etc?
10. Security/integrity			
	Guidance and information was issued to Candidates and Agents in the nomination pack and briefing sessions.	Some complaints made about, for example, use of social media, imprints on printed material and e-mails and content of election material.	Revisit the material used for the briefing of candidates and agents together with the packs we send out. Supplement the Electoral Commission material with enhanced practical examples and emphasise common issues such as imprints. Social media is likely to play an increasing role and we need to be as clear as possible in the guidance we give.

11. Verification and count arrangements			
Project planning	The verification and count procedures were amended to reflect the combination of polls and, particularly, the introduction of all-out elections. In the run up to the election we ran a number of sessions trialling the different approaches to “counting sheets” and settled on a model which gave the greatest control and security.	The Hatfield re-count on Saturday morning and the huge disparity in the number of candidates and vacancies for individual parishes led to an uneven workload for the 3 count tables. This was only partially balanced by the redistribution of ballot boxes and the utilisation of other count teams to help with the larger counts.	There is no particular need for the parish count to keep to the constituency/ward structure that was utilised for the Parliamentary and Borough Elections. With hindsight, it may have been better to ensure that each of the 3 count tables had one of the larger parishes to deal with from the outset and then use the smaller parishes to balance out the workload as far as possible. If we utilise this approach then it is essential that candidates and agents are kept fully informed of where counts are taking place. We do not ordinarily provide individual signs for parish counts, but it would be helpful to have suitable signage for the largest 4 or 5 parishes so that everyone is clear what is taking place in the event that we move counts to facilitate the best use of staff and other resources.
Delivery of ballot boxes	The revised arrangements for the receipt of ballot boxes worked extremely well. Save for the ballot boxes from one polling station which were delayed, 370 plus ballot boxes were received at the count venue by 10:40.	Notwithstanding the numbering and other systems in place, the sheer number of boxes and staff involved led to some pinch-points.	Improved signage in the count hall clearly identifying exactly where individual ballot boxes are to be placed.
Timings of verification and count	The verification of the 3 combined polls was completed just before 2.00 am on Friday morning. The first Parliamentary result was announced	Continue to assess the scale and impact of combined and all-out elections, particularly where large parishes and multiple	Ensure maximum use of technology to aid speed and efficiency. The practice of staffing the count with persons that <u>had not</u> worked on polling stations worked well, but

	<p>just before 4.30 am and the other two results announced shortly thereafter. The Borough Count commenced at 2pm on Friday and concluded at approximately 10pm. The Hatfield re-count and the Parish count commenced at 11.00 am on Saturday and concluded at approximately 6pm.</p>	<p>candidates are involved (for example, Armthorpe Parish Council had 24 candidates contesting 15 seats).</p>	<p>it did mean we did not always have access to some far more experienced staff. This will only occur on a General Election where we count through the night, but we should pay close attention to role allocation to ensure we make best use of our resources.</p>
<p>Venue and layout</p>	<p>The floor space available at the Racecourse means the count layout worked well. There is additional space to verify unused ballot papers and to sort and securely pack stationery from the polling stations.</p> <p>The racecourse staff were very helpful and efficient. Security is available 24 hours and ctv cameras in some areas.</p> <p>The ballot boxes were delivered speedily and efficiently due to the Presiding Officers being able to drive up the door of the count hall.</p> <p>The local and parish ballot papers were stored securely from the Thursday verification until the Friday and Saturday counts.</p>	<p>Improved signage?</p> <p>Increased utilisation of live updates from eXpress at the count.</p>	<p>Explore further the scope for reporting of votes, results, percentages and other statistics during the count. We were able to do this on two screens only which the Council provided. We cannot display on the Racecourse's plasma screens. This may change for future elections and we should ensure information is shared with persons present as widely as possible.</p>
<p>12. Postal voting</p>			
<p>Processing</p>	<p>The revised procedure to process a combined postal vote pack worked very well.</p>	<p>Electors who had their postal vote statement rejected will be informed within 3 months of the poll that their postal vote was</p>	<p>Review resources required for opening verifying and matching postal vote ballot papers taking into account the count will be taking place immediately at close of poll.</p>

	<p>Postal vote processing time was reduced due to the new election software and procedures.</p> <p>Postal vote processing time was reduced due to the new election software and procedures.</p> <p>A total of 79,335 postal vote packs were issued (Combined 61,536 and Parish 17,799) and 96,117 (Parliamentary 42,119, Local 42,368 and Parish 11,630) statements were returned. Of these, 1325 statements were rejected.</p> <p>The reasons why the 1325 statements were rejected (Parliamentary and Local 961, 7 Local only and 357 Parish) are set out below:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 538 Blank with both signature and DOB missing - 82 Signature only failed - 353 DOB only failed - 188 Both signature and DOB mismatched - 95 Signature missing - 69 DOB missing 	<p>rejected because the signature or date of birth that they have supplied on the postal voting statement failed to match that held on record - or where they had simply been left blank. A new postal vote application will be included for the elector to update their records.</p> <p>The practice of having a sealed ballot box for all votes that had been processed on a single day led to some delays in the distribution of those votes to the relevant count table at the election.</p>	<p>Review the postal vote procedures to include consideration of a combined pack including parish ballot papers. The date we know whether or not a parish is contested may mean it must be a separate pack.</p> <p>Review the arrangements after the final postal vote session of packing up and collection, transportation and storage of the postal vote statements and stationery.</p> <p>Have a single ballot box for the processed postal ballot papers for every parish council. Security can be maintained by utilising a sealed wallet every day. At the count, it will be a matter of allocating that single ballot box to the relevant count table rather than going through many ballot boxes to retrieve and allocate the numerous wallets for every parish council.</p>
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	<p>The arrangements for processing the postal votes at the Mary Woollett Centre are well-established and worked very well as before</p>		
<p>13. Candidates and agents</p>			
	<p>A prospective candidates and agents meeting took place on 27th March 2015. The meeting provided information and advice regarding standing for election, completing the nomination paper and general information about the postal vote process and the count. Attendees collected their nomination pack at the close of the meeting.</p> <p>A candidates and agents meeting was held on 10th April 2015, following close of nominations. The meeting provided more detailed information, arrangements for postal vote opening and the count were discussed in detail and it was an opportunity for questions to be asked. An information pack was sent out to all election agents or the candidate if they were their own election agents, if they did not attend.</p> <p>The information gave the electronic link to the expenses guidance and forms.</p>	<p>At this election we had a total of 547 nomination papers to process. The quality of submitted nomination papers was significantly improved over previous years with a commensurate reduction in the staff time dealing with rejected and resubmitted nominations. An appointments system was utilised for the receipt of nominations from MPs. Appointments were not practicable for the remainder. Additional staff were made available, there was a dedicated desk at the Civic Office reception and multiple nominations could be processed concurrently via the teams allocated to the task.</p> <p>The briefing material produced by the Electoral Commission was arguably too dry and did not have a sufficient practical component.</p>	<p>Make the appointment process standard practice for Parliamentary Elections. Continue to utilise additional resources to receive nominations for all-out elections, particularly where parishes are involved.</p>

14. Communication			
	<p>The candidacy of a political party leader led to huge media interest with approximately 120 persons given media accreditation to attend the verification and Parliamentary count. The Council's Communications Team handled all liaison with the media and supplemented its core team with additional colleagues. A dedicated media platform and area was created to facilitate tv and other coverage.</p>		<p>Review with the Council's Communications Team and carry forward any improvements to the project planning for the next election, particularly Parliamentary.</p>
15. Summary			
	<p>The Electoral Commission have confirmed that this was one of the largest combined polls ever seen. It was a huge learning curve and, over all, was delivered well. Managing an election of this scale and complexity was uncharted territory and the lessons learned will inform improved delivery in the future. The commitment and support of colleagues throughout the Council was tremendous and a genuine example of "Team Doncaster" at work.</p>		