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## Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2023 to 2024

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### Overview of the service

The objectives of the service are to deliver effective and high-quality electoral registration, elections, committee administration and member support services and to promote community engagement with an understanding of the democratic processes of the Council.

Democratic Services covers the following functions:

- committee administration, procedural advice and guidance
- member support (such as members allowances, outside bodies, registers of members interests, publishing of agendas, minutes and member information on the Council's website, member surgeries)
- member induction, training and development
- electoral registration
- elections

The majority of the service's activities are defined by legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance and involve working with a wide range of partners both internally and externally (for example, councillors, lead officers, service leads and report authors for committees, DLUHC, Cabinet Office, Electoral Commission, County Council, neighbouring councils, parish councils, ARP, LGA, ADSO, AEA).

On the committee and member support side, the service ensures the smooth running of full Council and committees by providing efficient and professional servicing of meetings: administrative, support, guidance, advice; and training to councillors and officers on all aspects of the democratic process. This position was reinforced by the appointment of the Democratic Services Manager (DSM) as Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) in October 2015 with specific responsibility for the provision of procedural information and advice and maintenance and updating of the Constitution.

Following the establishment of the Council's Trading Companies, the team clerks both the ECTC and ECSS Boards and associated bodies, operating under Company Law and/or outside of the governance processes of the Council, on a rechargeable basis. The team

clerks the Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board. Careful consideration is given to the separation of roles between the Boards and the Council and the shareholder functions.

With all-out District and Parish Council Elections in May 2023, Democratic Services staff are focussed on preparing for the new intake of district councillors, including arranging the new councillor induction and member training and development programmes.

Preparations are ongoing for the all-out district and parish elections and the team also will conduct potentially up to 10 Neighbourhood Plan Referenda during 2023 and early 2024, as well as any by-elections that may be required during the forthcoming year. In addition, there is the need to undertake a statutory Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review.

The Elections Act 2022 received Royal assent in April 2022 and will result in wide-ranging changes to registration and elections processes on a phased basis from January 2023 onwards. The first to be implemented is the introduction of voter identification from the May 2023 elections onwards, requiring photo ID to vote at a polling station. Other provisions to be implemented throughout the forthcoming year include:

- accessibility at polling stations - anyone aged 18 or over is permitted to accompany an elector in a polling station if they need assistance
- postal voting - minimising the number of postal votes handed in at a polling station and handling of postal votes by political campaigners will not be permitted
- overseas electors extended franchise

Other elements of the act due for phased implementation are clarification of undue influence; new electoral sanctions for intimidation; digital imprints new regime; the requirement for postal voters to reapply every three years (currently signature refresh every five years); changes to candidates addresses; and changes to commonly used names on nomination papers.

The Combined Authority Mayoral Elections and the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections now will both be elected on a 'first past the post' system. There also are revisions to EU citizens voting and candidacy rights.

## Cost of service

The cost to run the service in 2023 to 2024 totals £674,668 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

- members' and committee support - £629,577
- electoral services - £45,091

Key areas of expenditure in these budgets are:

- members allowances - £261,141
- member training - £14,000
- members ICT - £6,000
- electoral registration - £45,091
- elections - £22,500

The costs of external elections are recharged to the relevant body. A sum of £22,500 is put into an election reserve each year towards the cost of district council elections which take place every 4 years. Any district council by-election is an additional cost to this Council.

## Staffing Information

The service currently comprises 6 staff.

Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSM & DMO)

Senior Democratic Services Officer (SDSO)

1 Trainee Democratic Services Officer (DSO)

Electoral Services Team Leader (ESTL)

2 Electoral Services Officers (ESOs)

Having regard to the age and impending retirement of some members of the team, a staffing review was undertaken in Summer 2022, for succession planning purposes, to ensure that the structure remains 'fit for purpose' and to assist in the recruitment of successor staff with the required knowledge, skills and experience. This has resulted in some new appointments and changes in role already and further changes are likely to be required in 2023 to 2024.

## Forward planning for Councillors

Proposed item	Proposed date of decision	Committee
Half year report 2023 to 2024	November 2023	Finance and Assets
End of year report 2023 to 2024	March 2024	Finance and Assets
Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025	March 2024	Finance and Assets

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2023 to 2024

This Service Delivery Plan describes what Democratic Services will be doing to deliver continuous improvement (service objective). Each performance measure relates to the Council’s strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan 2022 to 2023.

**Council’s Strategic Outcome:** Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

**Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective:** Provide effective, high quality and legally compliant committee and member support services.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management. Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023	Owner and co-owners
Publish agenda for Regulatory Committees within 5 clear days of a meeting (statutory); Publish agenda for Council, Policy Committees and Audit Committee within 7 clear days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services Manager
Publish decision lists for Council/Committees within 3 working days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services Manager
Publish draft minutes for Council/Committees within 14 working days of a meeting	85%, annually	82%	Democratic Services Manager

**Council’s Strategic Outcome:** Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

**Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective:** Provide legal, efficient and cost-effective elections for the electors of the district and our external partners.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management. Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023	Owner and co-owners
Review customer feedback forms/information from election and resolve, as far as practicable, issues by commencement of next election period	90% of all customer feedback actioned (where possible) by commencement of next Election period, annually	100%	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

**Council’s Strategic Outcome:** Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

**Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective:** Publish and maintain accurate and legally compliant electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the district.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management. Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023	Owner and co-owners
Achieve at least an 85% registration rate for Route 2 forms	85%, annually	Change to performance measure to reflect revised canvass arrangements – Route 2 response rate 84.7% 2022 to 2023.	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader
Number of electors registering electronically via government portal	At least 8,000 to be registered, annually	Change to performance measure to reflect revised canvass arrangements – Route 1 changes had 3,167 electronic returns, Route 2 had 5,858 electronic returns 2022 to 2023.	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

**Council’s Strategic Outcome:** Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

**Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective:** Promote community engagement and involvement in the democratic processes of the Council.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 to 2023	Owner and co-owners
Publication of agendas on website on day of despatch	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services Manager

**Council's Strategic Outcome:** Be an excellent employer.

**Democratic Services' Strategic Objective:** Ensure continual professional development of staff and councillors.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management. Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 – 2023	Owner and co-owners
Ensure that all staff appraisals are completed annually and within the time frame set by HR	100%, annually	100% appraisals completed on time.	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader
Prepare, agree and implement member Induction, training and development programmes and member seminar sessions to provide members with the required knowledge and skills to effectively perform their role as a district councillor	2 member induction sessions; 15 sessions to be arranged as part of the member training and development and seminar programmes, annually	Change to performance measure due to District Council Elections in May 2023 – baseline 10 member seminars/training sessions and output 12 sessions held in 2022 to 2023.	Democratic Services Manager

**Council's Strategic Outcome:** Be an excellent employer.

**Democratic Services' Strategic Objective:** Ensure that Council's corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management. Social and community infrastructure.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 – 2023	Owner and co-owners
Regularly review higher level corporate risks, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• changes to the political composition of the Council affecting the democratic decision-making processes</li><li>• local, regional and national legislative and policy changes affecting the democratic process, both in terms of electoral administration/elections and democratic decision-making</li><li>• impact of corporate initiatives such as shared services, commercialisation, on the working practices of the team</li></ul>	100%, annually	Reviews of Constitution and committee structure. IRP review of members' allowances. Conduct local elections/referenda. Offering services of team on a commercial basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clerking of ECTC &amp; ECSS Boards</li><li>• clerking of Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board</li><li>• Democratic Services Manager providing management support, advice and training services to other authorities/bodies</li></ul> Conduct PDR/CGR.	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader

**Council’s Strategic Outcome:** A clean, green and attractive place.

**Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective:** Reduce paper usage via greater use/uptake of electronic solutions.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2022 – 2023	Owner and co-owners
Encourage and facilitate new intake of councillors’ usage of electronic means to access and receive Council information/agendas	25% of councillors to receive agendas via electronic means, annually	New performance measure.	Democratic Services Manager
Encourage greater usage of electronic means of response/communication by/with electors, canvass and elections staff on electoral registration and elections matters, where possible	As identified, annually	New performance measure.	Democratic Services Manager Electoral Services Team Leader
Democratic Services staff to actively seek to reduce paper usage via electronic solutions	As identified, annually	New performance measure.	Democratic Services Manager