

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2022 - 2023

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 (e.g. 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 (e.g. 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. Careful consideration is given to the separation of roles between the Boards and the Council and the Shareholder functions.

The Team clerks the Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board; an external partner body, the RECAP Board; and the DSM is providing some guidance and support to the Combined Authority IRP, all on a chargeable basis.

The Elections Team will conduct any Neighbourhood Plan Referenda and By-Elections that may be required during the year and from the Winter/Spring onwards will be preparing for the District and Parish Elections to take place in May 2023.

Canvass reform was introduced in 2020 and changed the way the annual Canvass was conducted. Every LA must take part in national data matching process before they start the Canvass, and this results in properties being divided into three categories: route 1, route 2 and route 3. ECDC does not have any route 3 properties. Route 1 are primarily fully matched 'no changes' letters, and are not required to respond; and route 2 are not fully matched 'changes' letters which require a response, and these are followed up with personal 'door knocking' visits for non-responders. A review will be undertaken of our current processes in preparation for the 2022 Canvass to ensure that they are still 'fit for purpose'.

An Elections Bill also is making its way through the Parliamentary process at present, which will result in a range of changes to registration and Elections processes, which are likely to include: the introduction of voter identification; changes to Overseas Elector registration arrangements; easier postal voting procedures; and the repeal of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act.

Cost of Service

The cost to run the service in 2021/22 totals £584,661 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

Members' & Committee Support £531,290
 Electoral Services £53,371

Key areas of expenditure in these Budgets are:

Members Allowances £232,744
 Member Training £3,500
 Members ICT £6,000
 Electoral Registration £53,371
 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 as follows:

Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSM & DMO)
 2 Democratic Services Officers (DSOs)
 Electoral Services Team Leader
 Electoral Services Officer
 Electoral Services Trainee (22 hours per week & FTE during Elections period)

Forward planning for Councillors

Proposed date of decision	Item	Service Area	Committee
May 2022 onwards	Ongoing delivery of Member Training, Development and Member Seminar Programme	Democratic Services	
July to 1 December 2022	Publish Register of Electors based on IER Canvass	Democratic Services	
Winter 2022/ Spring 2023	Preparations for District and Parish Council Elections in May 2023 and new Member Induction, Training & Development Programme	Democratic Services	

Strategy map – 2022/23



Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
Provide effective, high quality and legally compliant Committee and Member Support Services	Sound Financial Management	Publish Agenda for Regulatory Committees, etc, within 5 clear days of a meeting (statutory)	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
	Social & Community Infrastructure	Publish Agenda for Council, Policy Committees & Audit Committee within 7 clear days of a meeting (new target)	100% published	
		Publish decision lists for Council/Committees, etc, within 3 working days of a meeting	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		Publish draft Minutes for Council/Committees, etc, within 14 working days of a meeting	92.0%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
Provide legal, efficient and cost-effective Elections for the Electors of the District and our external partners		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	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader

Publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant Electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the District	Sound Financial Management	To publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant Electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the District in order to achieve at least a	95.20% registration	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
	Social & Community Infrastructure	90% registration rate Electors registering electronically via Government portal, etc At least 12,000 to be registered	13,224 registered	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
Promote community engagement and involvement in the Democratic processes of the Council	Social & Community Infrastructure	Publication of Agendas on website on day of despatch 100% to be published	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
To ensure trained staff and continual professional development of Councillors	Social & Community Infrastructure	To ensure that all staff appraisals are completed annually and within the time frame set by HR 100% appraisals completed on time	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
		To 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 10 sessions to be arranged as part of the Member Training & Development and Seminar Programme	7	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager

<p>Ensure that the Council's corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.</p>	<p>Sound Financial Management</p> <p>Social & Community Infrastructure</p>	<p>To regularly review higher level corporate risks, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to the political composition of the Council affecting the democratic decision-making processes; • Local, regional and national legislative and policy changes affecting the democratic process, both in terms of electoral administration/elections and democratic decision-making; • Impact of corporate initiatives such as shared services, commercialisation, on the working practices of the Team. 	<p>Reviews of Constitution & Committee structure</p> <p>IRP review of Members' Allowances</p> <p>Conduct local Elections/Referenda</p> <p>Offering services of Team on a commercial basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerking of ECTC & ECSS Boards • Clerking of RECAP Board • Clerking of Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board • Dem Services Manager providing management support & advice to other authorities <p>Conduct PDR/CGR</p>	<p>Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader/Maggie Camp Legal Services Manager & Monitoring Officer</p>
<p>Undertake activities which help to mitigate / adapt to climate change</p>	<p>Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire</p>	<p>To contribute to the implementation of the Council's Climate and Environment Action Plan</p>		<p>Cross-council activity</p>