

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; DCLG; Cabinet Office; Electoral Commission; County Council; neighbouring Councils; Parish Councils; ARP; LGA; ADSOs; AEA).

On the committee and Member support side, the Service ensures the smooth running of Full Council and committees by providing the administration, support, guidance, advice and training to Members and officers on all aspects of the Democratic process. This position was enhanced 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.

This year has been notable for the commencement of the four yearly review of the Members' Allowances Scheme by an Independent Remuneration Panel and a review of the Council's Committee structure, both of which will report to full Council in April 2017; the establishment of the LATC and the governance structures required in conjunction with this, all of which are clerked by the Team; and the Devolution proposals for Cambridgeshire, the governance stream of which the DSM has been involved in through the Cambridgeshire Monitoring Officers Group. The ECTC Board operates under Company Law, and outside of the governance processes of the Council, so is clerked on a rechargeable basis. The Team also will be clerking an external partner body, the RECAP Board, on a chargeable basis from January 2017; and the Democratic Services Manager is providing some Democratic Services management support and advice to SCDC for an interim period of up to 6 months on a chargeable basis, as SCDC had been unsuccessful in recruiting to their Democratic Services Team Leader post.

On the Electoral Registration side, the Team continues to implement, consolidate, monitor and review all of the processes and systems relating to Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Central Government, via the Cabinet Office, has given a commitment to fully funding the additional costs of IER during the life of this parliament. As in previous years, the Cabinet Office provided each Local Authority with an initial 2016/17 grant payment in May of this year and although it was expected that this payment would be sufficient to cover the additional costs of IER for the majority of authorities this financial year, areas where this initial payment may have been insufficient to fully meet these costs, could submit a further evidence-based Justification Led Bid (JLB) in January 2017.

Electoral Services Officers have also been requested to complete an IER Cost Survey to improve the Cabinet Office's understanding of the cost pressures resulting from the additional costs of the move to IER faced by administrators across the country, to improve the economic modelling that will be used to determine future funding agreements and allocations.

On the Elections side, the Team conducted the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May and EU Referendum in June 2016 and an Ely North Parish By-Election in October 2016, due to the resignation of a City of Ely Councillor.

The Council has contributed to two reviews by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of the electoral arrangements for the County and District which has resulted in a reduction in the number of County Councillors for this District from 9 to 8 from the County Council elections in 2017 and a reduction in the number of District Councillors (Council size) from 39 to 28 from the next District Council elections in 2019.

Looking forward, The Chief Executive has been designated as Local Returning Officer (LRO) for the County Council elections and Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) to conduct the Mayoral elections for the Combined Authority, both taking place in May 2017. A review of the Job Profiles of the two Electoral Services staff is being conducted to ensure that they accurately reflect changes in responsibilities resulting from IER; re-structuring of the Team and in relation to Elections functions, which includes changes to their job titles.

Cost of service

The cost to run the service in 2017/18 totals £515,106 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

Members' & Committee Support	£436,624
Electoral Services	£76,969

Key areas of expenditure in these Budgets are:

Members Allowances	£212,353
Member Training	£3,500
Members ICT	£6,000
Electoral Registration	£54,469
Elections	£22,500

The costs of external elections are recharged to the relevant body. The 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 comprises 6 staff as follows:

Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSM & DMO)
2 Democratic Services Officers (DSOs)
Democratic Services Support Officer (30 hours per week)
Electoral Services Team Leader
Electoral Services Officer

Forward planning for Councillors

Proposed date of decision	Item	Service Area	Service Delivery Champion	Committee
April 2017	Reporting of outcome of review of Committee Structure and IRP Review and implementation of changes arising from decisions	Democratic Services	Councillor Stuart Smith	Full Council 11 April 2017 & Full Council 25 May 2017
May 2017 onwards	Ongoing delivery of structured Member Training, Development and Member Seminar Programme	Democratic Services	Councillor Stuart Smith	
March to May 2017	Conducting of County Council Elections & Mayoral election for new Combined Authority	Democratic Services	Councillor Stuart Smith	
August to 1 December 2017	Publish Register of Electors based on IER Canvass	Democratic Services	Councillor Stuart Smith	

Strategy map - 2017/2018



Commitments towards our Vision



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Service Delivery Plan - Democratic Services

Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
Provide effective, high quality and legally compliant Committee and Member Support Services	A customer driven efficient Council with a "can do" attitude and pro business approach, commercially focused to ensure financial self-sufficiency for the tax payer and safe, vibrant and inclusive communities.	Publish Agenda for Council/Committees, etc, within 5 working days of a meeting (statutory)	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		100% published		
		Publish decision lists for Council/Committees, etc, within 3 working days of a meeting	90.9%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		95% published		
Provide legal, efficient and cost-effective Elections for the Electors of the District and our external partners		Publish draft Minutes for Council/Committees, etc, within 14 days of a meeting	93.8%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		85% published		
Publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant Electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the District		Review customer feedback forms/information from Election and resolve, as far as practicable, issues by commencement of next Election period	98%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
		95% of all customer feedback is actioned (where possible) by commencement of next Election period		
		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 an	92.6%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
		90% registration rate		
		Electors registering electronically via Government portal, etc At least 12,000 to be registered	13,232 registered	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader

Performance Measure	Link to Corporate Plan Priority	Target and reporting timescale (i.e. 6 monthly or annually)	Baseline from previous year/output from previous year	Owner and co-owners
Promote community engagement and involvement in the Democratic processes of the Council		Publication of Agendas on website on day of despatch 98% to be published	97.9% published	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
To ensure trained staff, comprehensive understanding by Service Delivery Champion and continual professional development of Councillors		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 include Service Delivery Champion in all aspects of the day to day running of the Democratic Services Team to promote transparency and good partnership working and meet on a quarterly basis 4 meetings arranged	4	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		To prepare, agree and implement a Programme of Member Seminar, Training and Development 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 develop sessions	10	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager