

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2014 – 2015

Overview of Democratic Services

The Service comprises 6 full-time staff and 1 temporary cover at peak Elections/Canvass periods as follows:

Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO)
3 Democratic Services Officers (DSOs)
Electoral Services Officer
Electoral Services Assistant
Temporary Electoral Services Assistant

The objectives of the Team are to deliver effective and high quality Electoral Registration, Elections, Committee Administration and Member Support Services and to promote Community engagement with and 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
Quasi-Legal Administration (e.g. requisitions for information, burials with no known relatives, Planning adverts)

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).

The cost to run the service totals £790,146 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

Members' & Committee Support	£599,505
Electoral Services	£190,642

Key areas of expenditure in these Budgets are:

Members Allowances	£208,083
Member Training	£2,008
Electoral Registration	£92,003
Elections	£93,639

The two biggest potential challenges/pressures on the Budget of the Service for 2014/15 and leading into 2015/16, are Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the forthcoming District and Parish Council Elections in May 2015.

The national requirement for all Councils to implement IER from 10 June 2014 and to conduct the 2014 Canvass on this basis, is the biggest change to the electoral registration system in nearly 100 years and requires the complete revision of all of the administrative systems and processes relating to electoral registration previously undertaken by the Team. Whilst Central Government has provided an IER Transition Costs (Revenue) Grant for 2014/15 of £42,857, there is no guarantee that this will be sufficient to cover the additional costs of implementation of the new systems and procedures for IER, and there is no indication that further grants will be forthcoming for future years.

The 2015 District and Parish Council (D&P) Elections are likely to be combined with a General Election, which should help to mitigate the costs of these Elections to the Council, and mean that the allocation in the Election Reserve that usually funds the Council's own Elections will be sufficient. However, additional funding will be required for the more comprehensive Members Induction, Training and Development Programme necessary after the District Council Elections.

On the Committees and Members Support side, the biggest challenge is the implementation and operation of the new Committee structure effective from the Annual Council meeting, including the establishment of the new Member roles of Service Delivery Champions. The ongoing sickness absence of one DSO (Melanie Sage) is requiring the reallocation of Committee responsibilities and workloads on an interim basis.

Forward Planning for Councillors

Proposed date of decision/ implementation	Item/Event/ Project Stage	Service Area	Member Champion	Committee/Body
June 2014 onwards	Implementation and operation of new Committee Structure, including Member Service Delivery Champions	Democratic Services	Christine Ambrose-Smith	
16 October 2014	Completion and reporting of outcome of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review	Democratic Services	Christine Ambrose-Smith	Full Council
1 December 2014	Publish Register of Electors based on first IER Canvass	Democratic Services	Christine Ambrose-Smith	

Autumn/Winter 2014 onwards	Preparation, approval and organisation of structured Member Induction, Training and Development Programme for post-Election period	Democratic Services	Christine Ambrose-Smith	Chief Executive/IRMD(TA) Project Board/Chairmen's Group/Group Leaders
March – May 2015	Conducting of District Council, Parish Council and General Elections	Democratic Services	Christine Ambrose-Smith	

Strategy map



Measuring Performance

Provision of Effective and Compliant Committee Services Performance Measure	Target	Actual
Publish Agenda for Council/Committees, etc, within 5 working days of a meeting (statutory)	100%	
Publish decision lists for Council/Committees, etc, within 3 working days of a meeting	90%	
Publish draft Minutes for Council/Committees, etc, within 14 days of a meeting	85%	

Elections Performance Measure	Target	Actual
Review customer feedback forms/information from Election and resolve, as far as practicable, issues by commencement of next Election period	95%	

Electoral Registration Performance Measure	Target	Actual
% level of registration from IER Canvass	95%	
% of Electors registering electronically via Government portal	25%	

Engagement with Democratic Process Performance Measure	Target	Actual
Publication of Agendas on website within 2 working days of despatch	90%	

Staff and Member Training and Development Performance Measure	Target	Actual
% of appraisals completed on time	100%	
Service awareness briefings for Member Champion	4	
Number of Member training/seminar sessions held per year	10	

Delivering the service

Name	Effective, High Quality and Legally Compliant Committee and Member Support Services
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO)
Purpose	To provide effective, high quality and legally compliant Committee and Member Support Services
Links	Relevant legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance
Formula	See below
Source of Data	Democratic Services database
Frequency	Monthly
Target	100% Agendas despatched within 5 working days of meeting (statutory) Publish 90% decision lists for Council/Committees, etc, within 3 working days of a meeting Publish 85% draft Minutes for Council/Committees, etc, within 14 days of a meeting
Rewards/Penalties	Legal challenge for non compliance with statutory duty Reputation of Council
Who measures?	PDSO and Democratic Services Team
Who acts on the data?	PDSO and Democratic Services Team
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance of annual Agenda Plans for Council/Committees, etc 2. Preparation of draft agendas and organisation/clerking of Agenda Briefing meetings 3. Preparation, printing and despatch of agendas in accordance with statutory timescales 4. Publication of Agendas, Decision Lists, Minutes, Constitution and Member information on website 5. Attendance at Chairman's pre-Committee briefings 6. Organisation of Planning, Licensing, other Committee site visits 7. Clerking of meetings and preparation of Decision Lists/Minutes 8. Providing of procedural advice/guidance to Councillors, officers and other relevant partners 9. Administration of Independent Remuneration Panel 10. Processing of Members Allowances expenses claims 11. Outside Bodies administration 12. Maintenance of registers of Members Interests 13. Administration for Member Surgeries expenses 14. Assist Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer in review and implementation of changes to the Democratic processes of the Council and review of the Constitution 15. Effective Budget management and monitoring
Feedback	Quarterly performance report
Notes	

Name	Legal, Efficient and Cost-Effective Elections
Owner	Electoral Services Officer and Returning Officer
Purpose	To provide legal, efficient and cost-effective Elections for the Electors of the District and our external partners
Links	Relevant legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance DCLG; Cabinet Office; Electoral Commission; County Council; neighbouring Councils; Parish Councils; AEA
Formula	Conduct of Elections in accordance with requirements of relevant responsible body, instructions of Returning Officer and legislative provisions/guidance
Source of Data	As above
Frequency	In accordance with prescribed timescales
Target	Review customer feedback forms/information from Election and resolve as far as practicable 95% issues by commencement of next Election period
Rewards/Penalties	Legal challenge Reputation of Council
Who measures?	Electoral Services Officer and Returning Officer Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office
Who acts on the data?	Electoral Services Officer, Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer, Electoral Services staff, PDSO, Facilities Team, IT, Communications and Media Manager, Postal Vote issuing/opening staff, Polling Station staff, Count staff, Polling Station Inspectors, Elections Project Board
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Liaison with relevant responsible body in case of non-District Council Election 2. All aspects of pre-Election, Election day, Count and post-Election administration 3. All aspects of budgetary, financial, contract administration and control relating to Election and recharging of costs of Election to relevant responsible body in case of non-District Council Elections 4. Post-Election evaluation
Feedback	Evaluation of each Election undertaken by Returning Officer and Elections Project Board Feedback forms issued to Polling Station staff, Polling Station Inspectors Feedback from relevant responsible body in case of non-District Council Elections Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office
Notes	Contribution made to Election Reserve each year to fund District Council Elections held every four years

Name	Electoral Registration
Owner	Electoral Services Officer and Registration Officer
Purpose	To publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant Electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the District
Links	Relevant legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance DCLG; Cabinet Office; Electoral Commission; AEA
Formula	Conduct of IER Canvass and rolling Electoral registration in accordance with legislative provisions/guidance, instructions of Registration Officer
Source of data	As above
Frequency	In accordance with prescribed timescales
Target	95% level of registration from IER Canvass 25% of Electors registering electronically via Government portal
Rewards/Penalties	Inaccurate Register of Electors Legal challenge Reputation of Council
Who measures?	Electoral Services Officer and Registration Officer
Who acts on the data?	Electoral Services Officer, Registration Officer, Electoral Services staff, IT, Legal Services, PDSO
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting of all administrative aspects of 2014 Canvass in accordance with requirements for IER and publication of register by 1 December 2014. 2. Consideration and implementation of new working practices to maximise registration amongst target groups within the District, (e.g. migrant workers, care homes, studs and racing establishments, students/young persons, private rented/social housing residents). 3. Completion of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations review to enable any changes to be incorporated into Electoral Register published by 1 December 2014. 4. Undertaking of rolling registration after publication of Electoral Register in December 2014 in accordance with requirements for IER. 5. Active Budget monitoring and control to minimise expenditure and maximise income/Government funding relating to IER.
Feedback	Evaluation of new systems and processes following completion of first IER Canvass Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office
Notes	<p>The national requirement for all Councils to implement IER from 10 June 2014 and conduct the 2014 Canvass on this basis, is the biggest change to the electoral registration system in nearly 100 years and requires the complete revision of all of the administrative systems and processes relating to electoral registration previously undertaken by the Team.</p> <p>Whilst a Project Board has been in place since June last year to undertake the considerable work on the transition to IER and extensive directions and guidance and transitional grant funding have been provided by the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office, there are still a number of risk factors relating to implementation of IER due to the level of change required, in terms of the new processes, IT systems, and difficulties in quantifying the financial and staffing resources required.</p>

Name	Promotion of Community Engagement and Involvement in the Democratic Process
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO) Electoral Services Officer (ESO)
Purpose	To promote community engagement and involvement in the Democratic processes of the Council
Links	Public Question Time, Public Speaking and Public Petitions Schemes in Council Constitution Relevant legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance DCLG; Cabinet Office; Electoral Commission; AEA
Formula	To facilitate and encourage public access and participation at Council and Committee meetings To undertake initiatives to encourage electoral registration and turnout at elections
Source of data	As above
Frequency	Ongoing consideration of new initiatives/response to legislative requirements/guidance Annual review of Public Question Time, Public Speaking and Public Petitions Schemes In response to enquiries/requests from public, schools, Councillors, community groups
Target	Publication of 90% Agendas on website within 2 working days of despatch 95% level of registration from IER Canvass 25% of Electors registering electronically via Government portal
Rewards/Penalties	Improved electoral registration and turnout at elections Improved public attendance and participation at Council and Committee meetings Improved public awareness of Democratic processes of the Council Improved public profile and reputation of Council
Who measures?	PDSO/ESO
Who acts on the data?	PDSO and Democratic Services Team
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effective management and review of Council/Committee Public Speaking, Question Time and Petitions schemes. 2. Timely publication and updating of Committees, Member and local democracy information on website. 3. Consideration and implementation of new initiatives/working practices to maximise registration amongst target groups within the District, (e.g. migrant workers, care homes, studs and racing establishments, students/young persons, private rented/social housing residents). 4. Respond to requests from schools/colleges for Council visits and presentations on local democracy as part of citizenship element of curriculum. 5. Respond to requests from schools/colleges for resources to assist in local democracy teaching and conduct of school council elections.

	6. Liaison with Communications and Media Manager on preparation of appropriate Press releases in relation to Committee, Electoral Registration and Elections processes of Council. 7. Production of publications on standing for Election as a District Councillor, new candidates pack.
Feedback	From public, schools, community groups
Notes	The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 published in August 2014 make it a statutory requirement for local authorities to allow photography, filming, audio recording, blogging and tweeting of meetings.

Name	Staff Appraisals and Training and Development
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO) Electoral Services Officer (ESO)
Purpose	To ensure that all staff appraisals are completed annually and within the time frame set by HR
Links	HR Policy and Procedure Corporate Priorities Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan
Formula	To undertake staff appraisals within time frame set by HR ensuring all staff complete documentation to enable feedback and sign off. Training needs to be identified and new accountabilities set.
Source of Data	Performance against accountabilities
Frequency	Annually
Target	100%
Rewards/Penalties	To provide staff with feedback on performance (good and bad), Identify training needs/skills gaps. Acknowledgment from Chief Executive if score 5
Who measures?	PDSO, ESO, HR, Chief Executive, Service Delivery Champion, Regulatory & Support Services Committee
Who acts on the data?	All staff
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time frame set by HR 2. Line managers to book appraisal with staff 3. Line manager to issue staff with paperwork to complete 4. Paperwork to be completed by appraisee and returned to Line manager 5. Appraisal undertaken and comments from line manager added 6. Completed documentation agreed by line manager and appraisee and signed off 7. Completed appraisal sent to HR 8. Identification of staff training needs as part of appraisal process 9. Organisation of attendance of staff on relevant training 10. Evaluation of quality, relevance, effectiveness of training following attendance
Feedback	1-1, mid-term appraisal, training evaluation forms
Notes	Any discussion at appraisals should not come as a surprise; issues that arise regarding performance should be dealt with in a timely manner.

Name	Service awareness briefings for Service Delivery Champion
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO) Electoral Services Officer (ESO)
Purpose	To update Service Delivery Champion with progress within Democratic Services, how the service is being operated and budgetary updates. Service Delivery Champion to act as critical friend.
Links	Service policies and procedures Service Delivery Plan
Formula	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. Service Delivery Champion will be able to understand the everyday running of the Team and will be able to offer advice, guidance and assistance where required.
Source of Data	Notes of meetings with Service Delivery Champion, decisions made at Corporate Governance and Finance Committee. Feedback from Members and Chief Executive.
Frequency	Quarterly meetings with Service Delivery Champion
Target	4 per year
Rewards/Penalties	Service Delivery Champion will develop a better understanding of the services delivered by Democratic Services. They will act as a critical friend, and will challenge and promote what we do. They will be able report to the Council on the Team's activities and respond to questions and enquiries.
Who measures?	PDSO, Chief Executive, Service Delivery Champion, Corporate Governance and Finance Committee
Who acts on the data?	PDSO and Democratic Services Team
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify Member Service Delivery Champion 2. Member Champion to undertake induction in service area, meet with appropriate staff and agree expectations (from both sides) 3. Invite Member to shadow the team if they wish 4. Invite Member to Team meetings 5. Member Service Delivery Champion to be consulted on draft Service Delivery Plan prior to submission to Committee each year 6. Include Member Service Delivery Champion in the distribution of quarterly performance reports
Feedback	Quarterly performance report
Notes	

Name	Councillor Training and Development
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO)
Purpose	To provide Councillors with continual professional development via a structured Member Induction, Training and Development Programme
Links	Chief Executive Service Leads Appropriate external training providers EELGA Democratic Services Officers in neighbouring Councils who are part of Cambridgeshire Member Development Network
Formula	To prepare, agree and implement a Programme of Member Induction, Training and Development.
Source of Data	As above
Frequency	Annually
Target	Hold at least 10 Member training/seminar sessions held per year
Rewards/Penalties	To provide Members with the required knowledge and skills to effectively perform their role as a District Councillor
Who measures?	PDSO, Chief Executive, Service Delivery Champion, Regulatory & Support Services Committee
Who acts on the data?	Democratic Services Team, Chief Executive, Assistant Directors, Service Leads, relevant Officers undertaking training/seminars, Members
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To draft, agree and organise a Member Induction, Training and Development Programme to be implemented following the District Council Elections 2. To timetable one Members seminar date each month into the annual Calendar of Meetings 3. To undertake the administration of Member seminar/training sessions in conjunction with the officer, partner organisation, or trainer facilitating the seminar 4. To organise ad hoc Member induction and training sessions, as required, e.g. due to a by-election or changes in membership of Planning or Licensing Committees 5. To consider the specific personal development needs of Members or requests from Members for attendance at training sessions and organise training in the most cost-effective manner possible, bearing in mind the limited Budget available in a non-election year 6. Liaise with officers in neighbouring Councils who are part of Cambridgeshire Member Development Network regarding sharing of places on training sessions being offered by those Councils or ourselves to meet training needs and mitigate costs
Feedback	From Members and trainers Evaluation of training/seminar sessions
Notes	

Name	Member Training and Development Programme Budget
Owner	Principal Democratic Services Officer (PDSO)
Purpose	To agree, monitor and ensure value for money in the use of the Budget for the Member Training and Development Programme
Links	Chief Executive Financial Services Manager Service Leads Appropriate external training providers EELGA Democratic Services Officers in neighbouring Councils who are part of Cambridgeshire Member Development Network
Formula	Budget provision and monitoring
Source of Data	Draft Budget for February Council meeting Budget Book Budget monitoring reports Quotes of individual external training providers
Frequency	Ongoing
Target	100%
Rewards/Penalties	To provide a structured Member Training and Development Programme within Budget and on a value for money basis
Who measures?	PDSO, Chief Executive, Financial Services Manager, Service Delivery Champion, Regulatory & Support Services Committee
Who acts on the data?	Democratic Services Team, Chief Executive, Financial Services Manager, Assistant Directors, Service Leads, relevant Officers undertaking training/seminars, Members
What will be done	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To estimate the overall Budget requirement for the Member Induction, Training and Development Programme to be implemented following the District Council Elections based on the draft Programme agreed with the Chief Executive, Service Leads and Group Leaders 2. To liaise with the Financial Services Manager to ensure adequate budgetary provision is made as part of the Council Budget-setting process for implementation of the Programme. 3. To engage external trainers who both best fit the brief for individual training sessions and offer value for money 4. To consider the specific personal development needs of Members or requests from Members for attendance at training sessions and organise training in the most cost-effective manner possible. 5. Liaise with officers in neighbouring Councils who are part of Cambridgeshire Member Development Network regarding sharing of places on training sessions being offered by those Councils or ourselves to meet training needs and mitigate costs 6. To monitor the Budget and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of training sessions
Feedback	From Members and trainers Evaluation of training/seminar sessions
Notes	

