

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan

2019 – 2020

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 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.

The Team has coped admirably in maintaining 'business as usual', despite the sickness absence of the DSM for a large part of the year.

On the Committee Services and Member Support side, this has involved the efficient and professional servicing of meetings and the provision of administrative, guidance and advice services to Councillors. Following the expansion of the Council's Trading Companies, the Team now clerks both the ECTC and ECSS Boards, operating under Company Law and outside of the governance processes of the Council, on a rechargeable basis. The Team also clerks the Shareholder Committee, and careful consideration is given to the separation of roles between the Boards and Shareholder Committee.

The Team clerks an external partner body, the RECAP Board, on a chargeable basis; and the Joint East Cambridgeshire and Fenland Living Well Partnership with Health Service bodies on an alternating basis with Fenland DC (from February 2018).

The creation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority with effect from May 2017 resulted in the DSM being appointed to act as Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) on a rechargeable basis, and the Democratic Services Team hosting the Combined Authority Scrutiny Officer. The Council currently is conducting an IRP review of allowances on behalf

of the Combined Authority, in conjunction with a review being undertaken by this Council for the Leader/Deputy Leader allowances arising from the Committee re-structuring.

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). The transfer to a new Electoral Services Management System (EMS) during the year led to significant implementation challenges, but the improved functionality of the new software should result in service improvements and efficiencies.

The annual Canvass will commence in July 2019 under the current legislative processes, but Canvass Reform proposals from the Cabinet Office may result in changes to Canvass arrangements from 2020/21 onwards, with potential preparations and a data-matching exercise in January 2020.

On the Elections side, there was a County By-Election for the Soham and Isleham Division, Parish By-Election at Little Downham, and the Fordham Neighbourhood Planning Referendum.

A Community Governance Review (CGR) and a Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review (PDR) were commenced in February 2018, to address issues arising from the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) of the electoral arrangements for the District, and to address a number of historical anomalies. These were completed in July 2018 in order that the required processes could be carried out to enable any changes to be incorporated into the Register of Electors ready for the District and Parish Council elections in May 2019. A Parliamentary PDR will commence in July 2019 to address Constituency changes arising from the Boundary Commission national review.

Further Neighbourhood Plan Referendums are anticipated in 2019/20 onwards, with the most imminent likely to be Sutton and Witchford.

The immediate focus for the Team has to be the District and Parish Council elections in May 2019, any national developments which may trigger elections or referenda and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in May 2020.

An extensive Member Induction and Training Programme has been drafted for the new intake of District Councillors to be elected in May 2019 on the revised District Ward Boundaries, which will see a reduction in the number of Members from 39 to 28. In anticipation of this, a Committee re-structuring has been approved by full Council at its meeting on 21 February 2019 to be implemented from the new Municipal Year in May 2019, which includes a reduction in the number of Policy Committees and revised Shareholder arrangements relating to the Trading Companies. As a result, a review of the structure of the Team will be undertaken to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose' to meet the needs of the new Councillors and revised Committee structure.

Cost of service

The cost to run the service in 2018/19 totals £573,639 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

Members' & Committee Support	£492,624
Electoral Services	£76,969

Key areas of expenditure in these Budgets are:

Members Allowances	£252,700
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

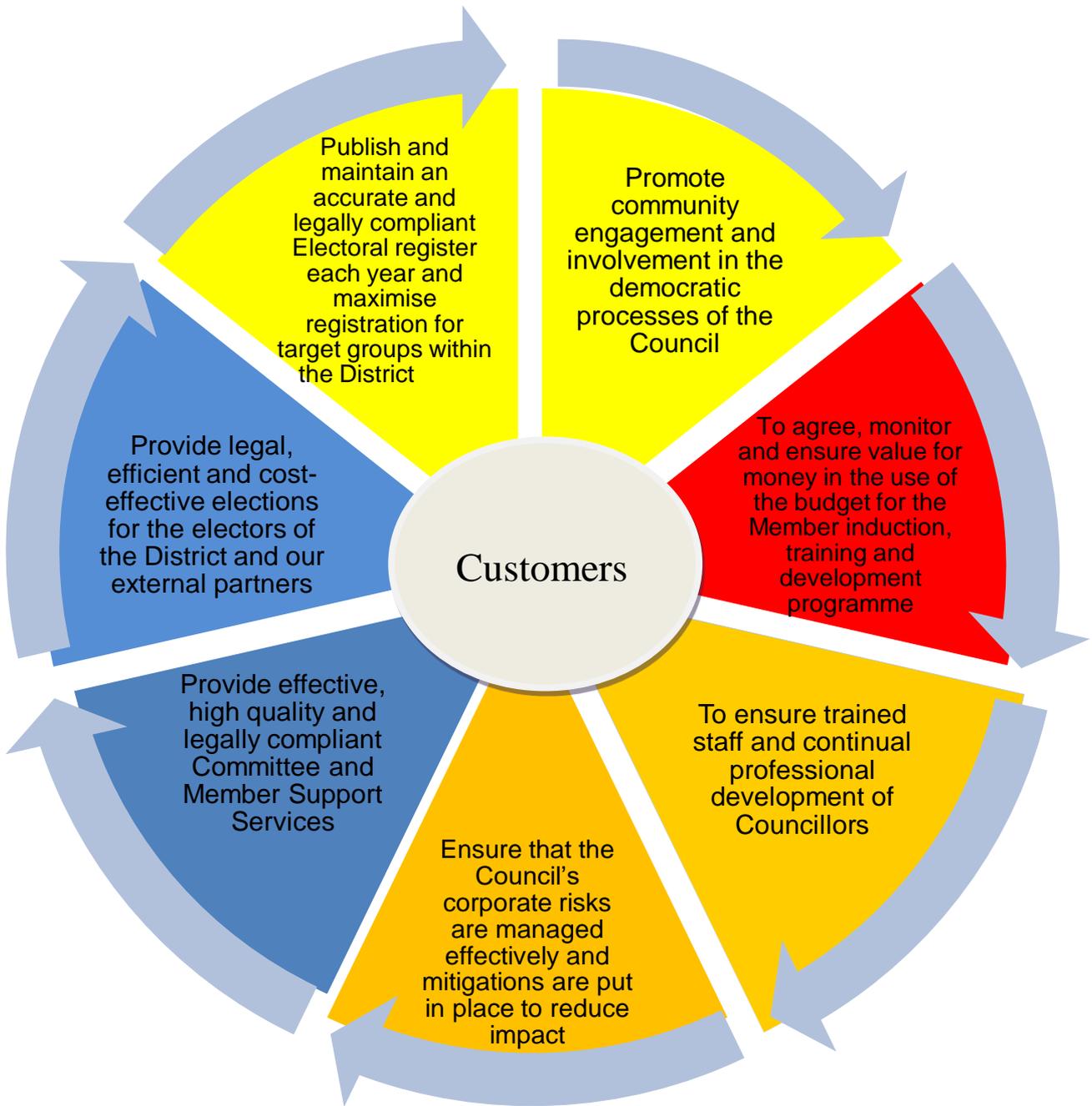
The Service comprises 6 staff as follows:

Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSM & DMO)
 2 Democratic Services Officers (DSOs)
 Democratic Services Support Officer (FTE during Canvass and Elections periods & 30 hours per week outside of these periods) – *currently filled on fixed term basis, pending review*
 Electoral Services Team Leader
 Electoral Services Officer

Forward planning for Councillors

Proposed date of decision	Item	Service Area	Committee
April to May 2019	Conducting of District and Parish Council Elections in May 2019	Democratic Services	
May 2019 onwards	Delivery of Member Induction, Training and Development, and Member Seminar Programmes	Democratic Services	
July 2019	Conducting of PDR for Parliamentary Constituencies review	Democratic Services	Full Council
July to 1 December 2019	Publish Register of Electors based on IER Canvass	Democratic Services	
March to May 2020	Conducting of PCC Elections	Democratic Services	

Strategy map - 2019/2020



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	Delivering a financially sound and well managed Council	Publish Agenda for Council/Committees, etc, within 5 working days of a meeting (statutory) 100% published	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		Publish decision lists for Council/Committees, etc, within 3 working days of a meeting 95% published	100%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
		Publish draft Minutes for Council/Committees, etc, within 14 days of a meeting 85% published	94.1%	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	Delivering a financially sound and well managed Council	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 90% registration rate	92.13% registration	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
		Electors registering electronically via Government portal, etc At least 12,000 to be registered	14,953 registered	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader
Promote community engagement and involvement in the Democratic processes of the Council	Delivering a financially sound and well managed Council	Publication of Agendas on website on day of despatch 98% to be published	99%	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
To ensure trained staff and continual professional development of Councillors	Delivering a financially sound and well managed Council	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 15 sessions to be arranged as part of the Member Induction & Development Programme	11	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager
Ensure that the Council's corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.		To regularly review higher level corporate risks, including: <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. 	Implement Committee re-structure from May 2019 Commenced IRP review of Members' Allowances for Combined Authority and ECDC Leader/Deputy Leader Conduct local Elections Offering services of Team on a commercial basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerking of ECTC & ECSS Board • Clerking of RECAP Board • Dem Services Manager acting as DMO for Combined Authority • Dem Services Manager providing management support & advice to other authorities Conduct PDR/CGR	Tracy Couper Democratic Services Manager/Joan Cox Electoral Services Team Leader