

# CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF: Returning Officer

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

14/9/2011

WARDS: None directly affected

## **ELECTORAL SERVICES RESOURCES**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report notes the additional complexity and volume of work associated with administering elections in recent and future years, and proposes the creation of an additional electoral services officer post to manage this additional work volume and complexity more effectively. Although approval of extra resources is a matter for the Council, the Committee's endorsement is sought in its constitutional position of overseeing the regulatory responsibilities for elections and electoral registration.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee endorses the intention to fund an additional post in the Electoral Services Team as part of the Medium Term Strategy process.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Chief Executive reported to Committee on 29 June that a review would take place over the summer of the resources available to run elections and electoral registration taking into account both the most recent years' experience and also what new undertakings for the service are being proposed by Government.
- 3.2 In addition to elections to the City Council, the electoral services team is responsible for County Council, Parliamentary and European elections. This year we had the added complexity of the referendum on voting systems, and in 2012 we are expecting to be responsible for the election of Police and Crime Commissioners. The increasing

popularity of postal votes, the possibility of a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries, the proposals for Parliamentary elections (and elections to the House of Lords using the Single Transferable Vote system) and the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) all add to the volume and complexity of work for the electoral services team.

- 3.3 The electoral services team has undergone significant staffing changes over the last five years, with a large number of temporary and/or staff without elections experience employed for varying periods of time. Employing temporary staff or re-allocating staff from other areas because they are available has been tried, but does not adequately address the long-time requirements of the service or provide the necessary resilience going forward.
- 3.4 The current staffing levels (two full-time posts) have not changed for ten years. In that time we have seen the introduction of monthly rolling registration, an edited version of the register, unrestricted postal voting and the introduction of postal vote identifiers, changes to some electoral franchises and many other significant modifications to electoral law and practices. All these changes have increased the demands on the service but resources have not adapted to meet them.
- 3.5 The introduction of IER from 2014 will not only require extra processes and procedures to be implemented within the service, but a great deal of consideration given to raising the public awareness of the changes. We are already talking to the Cabinet Office about the particular issues of a University college city. The current staffing arrangements would be sorely stretched with such a significant transformation of the electoral registration system and it is vital that the service is in a strong position in advance of these changes being introduced.
- 3.6 Specified below are the key tasks for the team and those projects and electoral developments in the pipeline. The table below also illustrates how the key elements of the service are spread across a year.

Month	Election Planning	Ordinary Election Period	Post-election returns/clear-up	Annual canvass planning	Annual canvass	Rolling Registration
January	#					#
February	#					#
March	#	#				#
April		#				#
May		#	#			#
June			#	#		#
July				#		#
August				#	#	#
September					#	
October					#	
November					#	
December	#				#	#

3.7 In order to safeguard a sure footing for the election team in preparation of the 2012 elections, it is vital that the recruitment process fits the election timescales and that any new post holder is in place in good time for basic training to be given and adequate staffing induction to take place. Ideally this post would commence no later than January 2012

3.8 This means a budget bid needs to be made in advance of the usual timetable. If the normal schedule were followed, then any new recruit would not be in post before the next scheduled elections in May 2012.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS

(a) **Financial Implications** - Funding for the new post in 2011/12 can be met from existing budgets for temporary staff who have been used in previous years. Funding for this post in future years would be met in part from the temporary staff budget and in part (£12,500) from a bid for additional resources in the Medium Term Strategy. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources has been consulted and supports the approach recommended in this report.

(b) **Staffing Implications** - Providing this additional capacity in the team should have a beneficial impact on the existing members of the team in managing the increasing workload and expectations more efficiently and less stressfully. If the recommendation receives approval, the full time electoral service team will consist of an Electoral Services Manager and two Electoral Services Officers.

In accordance with existing practices, this post would be offered to staff in the redeployment pool first, and then to other existing Council staff, before any external recruitment were considered.

none

(c) **Equal Opportunities Implications** - Equality Impact Assessment not conducted – there will however be greater opportunity for the manager of the service to provide local educational and outreach support to supplement that which is already provided by the Electoral Commission and other agencies.

(d) **Environmental Implications** - none

(e) **Community Safety** - none

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report:

There were no background papers.

The contact officer for queries on the report is Gary Clift 01223 457011  
gary.clift@cambridge.gov.uk

Report file:

Date originated: 05 September 2011

Date of last revision: 05 September 2011