



**Report to: Personnel & General Purposes Sub-Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022**

**Report of: Returning Officer / Deputy Returning Officer**

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**Subject: OUTCOME OF POSTAL VOTE REVIEW – MAY 2021 ELECTIONS**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Sub-Committee note the further assurances that have been put in place to maintain the integrity of the process for the delivery of elections following the outcome of the Postal Vote Review regarding the May 2021 Elections.**

**2. Introduction / Background**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 the Sub-Committee considered a report on the findings of the review carried out by the Returning Officer together with the Electoral Services Team into why 502 electors who had requested postal votes for the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 elections failed to receive their packs at the same time as the initial delivery.
- 2.2 The overall conclusion of the investigation was that running three elections in parallel had resulted in multiple file transfers between the Council and the service provider, CES, which led to one batch of processing not being completed in full. It was evident that quality control processes over the transfer of data could be improved to avoid a reoccurrence of this situation and maintain the integrity of the process for the delivery of elections.
- 2.3 At the meeting several Members acknowledged that remedial action was taken swiftly but sought further assurance that this situation could not be repeated. Members asked for clear operating procedures to be put in place for future elections.
- 2.4 The Returning Officer acknowledged the points made and assured Members that lessons have been learned and process improvements would be implemented for the May 2022 elections. The Sub-Committee requested a further report to be presented to the next meeting, setting out what steps will be taken for the issue of postal votes for May 2022 Local Elections.

**3. Further Assurances - Postal Vote Process**

- 3.1 Following the improvement measures that were identified as part of the outcome of the investigation and considered by the Sub-Committee, a detailed operating procedure has also now been compiled and put in place to ensure the necessary quality control measures are in place at each stage of the postal vote process.

- 3.2 The operating procedure clearly identifies the specific tasks, quality checks and who is responsible for each task at each stage of the process and is shown at **Appendix 1**.

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**Background Papers:**

**Report to Personnel and General Purposes Sub-Committee, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 - Outcome of Postal Vote Review – May 2021 Elections.**

**Postal Vote Operating Procedure  
January 2022**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
<b>Step 1 - Plan</b>	1.1 Contact supplier to agree service level requirements and despatch dates.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	1.2 Provide supplier with current postal vote data and current quantities.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	1.3 Provide Job Agreement (Service Level Agreement)	Supplier	
	1.4 Sign off Job Agreement.	Deputy Returning Officer	
	1.5 Create Royal Mail Plan of approximate quantities and confirm postal licence and agree Plan with Royal Mail.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
<b>Step 2 - Artwork</b>	2.1 Produce artwork proof of postal vote pack.	Supplier	
	2.2 Agree any amendments to artwork.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	2.3 Sign off final Artwork.	Deputy Returning Officer	
<b>Step 3 - First Stage Data</b>	3.1 Send first stage postal vote data to supplier using Xpress Management.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	3.2 File screenshot of Xpress Management absent vote screen of "confirmation of data upload message" and save in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	3.3 Create and save a "data export file" of data sent to supplier in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	3.4 Create: (1) Live PDF postal vote statement proofs and (2) Client data report showing total number of postal vote packs to be printed both accessible from the supplier's Sharepoint.	Supplier	
	3.5 Examine proofs against data on Electoral Register and sign off proofs.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	3.6 Sign off Client Data Report.	Returning / Deputy Returning Officer	

<b>Step 4 – Early Additions</b>	4.1	Send additional postal vote application data received after first stage data sent and prior to first stage data being printed.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	4.2	File screenshot of Xpress Management absent vote screen of “confirmation of data upload message” and save in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	4.3	Create and save a “data export file” of data sent to supplier in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	4.4	Produce total Client Data Report including first stage and early additions accessible from SharePoint.	Supplier	
	4.5	Sign off total Client Data Report.	Returning / Deputy Returning Officer	
<b>Step 5 – Despatch One</b>	5.1	Print 1st stage and early additions postal vote packs.	Supplier	
	5.2	Produce postal vote inspection box to be inspected at the Guildhall by Senior Electoral Services Officer, or	Supplier	
	5.3	Attend supplier Offices to inspect printed postal vote packs.	Returning / Deputy Returning Officer	
	5.4	Royal Mail to collect postal vote packs from Supplier.	Royal Mail	
	5.5	Acquire collection receipt from Royal Mail specifying the number of postal vote packs collected and send to Returning Officer.	Supplier	
<b>Step 6 – Second Stage Data</b>	6.1	Send second stage postal vote data after postal vote application deadline using Xpress Management.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	6.2	File screenshot of Xpress Management absent vote screen of “confirmation of data upload message” and save in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	6.3	Create and save a “data export file” of data sent to supplier in shared area for audit purposes.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	6.4	Create: (1) Live PDF postal vote statement proofs and (2) Client data report showing total number of postal vote packs to be printed both	Supplier	

		accessible from the supplier's Sharepoint.		
	6.5	Examine proofs against data on Electoral Register and sign off proofs.	Senior Electoral Services Officer	
	6.6	Sign off Client Data Report.	Returning / Deputy Returning Officer	
<b>Step 7 – Despatch Two</b>	7.1	Print 2nd stage postal vote packs.	Supplier	
	7.2	Royal Mail to collect postal vote packs from Supplier.	Royal Mail	
	7.3	Acquire collection receipt from Royal Mail specifying the number of postal vote packs collected and send to Returning Officer.	Supplier	
<b>Step 8 – Confirm Receipt of Postal Vote Pack</b>	8.1	Contact sample random postal votes to confirm receipt of postal vote pack.	Deputy Returning Officer	