

Agenda Item 36.

TITLE	May 2018 Local Elections
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2018
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Acting Returning Officer (and Assistant Director, Governance)

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That Members and the public have an understanding of the issues that affect the timing of the Borough and Parish counts taking place in May 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes that the Borough and Parish election counts will take place overnight immediately following the close of polls on 3rd May 2018.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

On Thursday 3 May 2018, there will be elections held for seats on the Borough and Parish councils.

When reaching a decision as to the most effective timing of the election counts, the Acting Returning Officer is required to take into account the guidance and performance standards of the Electoral Commission.

The report considers the various options for undertaking the election counts following the close of polls at 10pm and sets out the rationale for holding the counts overnight on 3rd/4th May

Background

On 3rd May 2018 there will be elections to seats in 18 out the 25 Borough wards as follows:-

- Arborfield
- Bulmershe and Whitegates
- Coronation
- Emmbrook
- Evendons
- Finchampstead North
- Finchampstead South
- Hawkedon
- Hillside
- Loddon
- Maiden Erlegh
- Norreys
- Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe
- Shinfield South
- South Lake
- Swallowfield
- Winnersh
- Wokingham Without

In addition, there will be elections for four Parish councils which may or may not be contested.

The decision as to when to hold the counts rests with the Acting Returning Officer taking into account guidance and performance standards from the Electoral Commission.

Analysis of Issues

With regard to the Borough and Parish counts, three possible options have been identified and considered:-

1. Immediately following the close of polls at 10am and overnight through the early hours of 4th May
2. Later in the day on Friday 4th May
3. Saturday 5th May

Analysis of Options - Pros and Cons

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivers results as early as possible in accordance with Electoral Commission guidance and standards• Separate count team employed who, in the main,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some Councillors would need to take a further day off from work as final results may not be available until 5-6am on Friday 4th May If (Parish Council counts are required the results would be the last to be declared).

	will not have been working on the elections during the day.	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results declared day following election but clearly later than option 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Councillors would need to take a further day off from work. Difficulty securing sufficient count staff Possible that not all counts would be completed (if we start at say 2pm on Friday) – eg if Parish counts are required these are more complex as they involve multiple seats.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Councillors would not have to take additional holiday from work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results declared two days after election Financial implications as would have to pay staff weekend rates

Conclusion

Taking into account the above analysis, option 1 is the most effective taking all stakeholders into account. This is in accordance with past practice when, historically, local election counts have been performed overnight except when polling day has been combined with national and/or regional elections (General, European). On those occasions, the national election count has taken precedence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£**	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£**	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

** the costs of elections are not separately broken down within the electoral services budget

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

Services and staff from across the Council support the delivery of the elections e.g. provision of poll clerks/presiding officers.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

Not applicable

List of Background Papers

Electoral Commission guidance and performance standards for Returning Officers

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