

Agenda Item 6.

TITLE	Returning Officer's Report on May 2024 Elections
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 May 2024
WARD	None specific
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton - Returning Officer

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To inform Council and residents of the results of 2nd May 2024 elections.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agrees to note the report of the Returning Officer.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

On 2nd May 2024, all-out elections were held in the eighteen wards of the Borough Council and, also, for the Wokingham area of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner election.

This was the first time in 20 years that the Borough Council has held elections for all its seats meaning the extent of the administration required was at least three times larger than in a usual election year. In addition, following the Boundary Commission's electoral review in 2023, the elections were being run on new ward boundaries.

The count for the Borough elections was held on Friday 3rd May. This was a particularly complex set of counts with 18 three-member borough wards.

The Elections Act 2022 introduced significant additional requirements for voters, campaigners, and the electoral services team including:

- the requirement for voters to show photo identification for in-person voting in polling stations (first introduced in May 2023);
- changes to postal voting (e.g. online application, rules surrounding the handling of postal votes);
- changes to proxy voting
- improving the accessibility of elections
- preventing undue influence
- changes to overseas voting

Overall, the administration of the various election processes was delivered successfully without any significant issues. Where feedback from electors and others has been received, this will be reviewed and, where appropriate, built into the planning for future elections.

The results from the Borough elections can be found at Appendix A.

Background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 2 May 2024, elections were held for all 54 seats of the Borough Council across eighteen wards.
- 1.2 173 candidates contested the 54 available seats on the Borough Council across 18 wards. Of those, the representation of the various parties was as follows:-
 - 54 Conservative Party
 - 8 Green Party
 - 1 Independent
 - 54 Labour Party
 - 54 Liberal Democrat Party
 - 2 Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition

2. The Election Process

- 2.1 Planning for elections takes place many months in advance of election day.
- 2.2 On the day of the poll, 65 polling stations were in use during the polling hours of 7am to 10pm. All polling stations had been previously risk-assessed. Visiting/inspecting officers attended all polling stations to ensure that all statutory procedures were adhered to under the Representation of the People Acts, and also that access arrangements were adequate for disabled voters. Feedback from this process will be used to help improve further the arrangements for future elections.
- 2.3 The verification and count of all ballot papers for the elections took place at Loddon Valley Leisure Centre on Friday 3rd May. This year, there was a particularly complex and extensive set of counts, with 18 counts for the borough elections. Again, all feedback received about the venue and count process is being considered to improve future processes.
- 2.4 At the elections in May 2024 approximately 750 casual election jobs were staffed and I would like to thank all Deputy Returning Officers, Polling Station Inspectors, Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks, counting and postal vote opening staff, supervisors and the Democratic and Electoral Services Team who carried out this important task. I am also grateful to colleagues across the Council from HR, Health & Safety, IT, facilities, highways, communications, web team, leisure services, and customer services who made significant contributions to ensuring the successful administration of this important corporate event.

3. Election Results

- 3.1 Full details of the Borough election results are set out in Appendix A.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Overall, the administration of the various election processes was delivered successfully with no significant issues. Where any improvements are identified, these will be built into our processes for future elections.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	There are no specific financial implications of this report.		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

There are no other financial implications associated with this report.

Cross-Council Implications

Elections are a key corporate event that require a cross-Council approach to ensure their successful delivery

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty is taken in the planning and discharge of the election processes.

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

There are no specific implications of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers

None

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ELECTION OF BOROUGH COUNCILLORS – 2nd MAY 2024

RETURN OF COUNCILLORS ELECTED

Ward	Name	Political Party	Retirement date
Barkham & Arborfield	Adrian Betteridge	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Joseph Barley	Conservative	2027
	George Evans	Conservative	2026
Bulmershe & Coronation	Alison Swaddle	Conservative	2028
	Shahid Younis	Conservative	2027
	Yusra Salman	Conservative	2026
Emmbrook	Rachel Bishop-Firth	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Imogen Shepherd-Dubey	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Basit Alvi	Liberal Democrats	2026
Ewendons	Mark Ashwell	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Lou Timlin	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Adrian Mather	Liberal Democrats	2026
Finchampstead	Charles Margetts	Conservative	2028
	Rebecca Margetts	Conservative	2027
	Peter Harper	Conservative	2026
Hawkedon	David Hare	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Rohit Ahlawat	Conservative	2027
	Melanie De Jong	Liberal Democrats	2026
Hillside	Pauline Jorgensen	Conservative	2028
	Moses Iyengunmwena	Conservative	2027
	Caroline Smith	Liberal Democrats	2026
Loddon	Greg Bello	Labour	2028
	Majid Nagra	Labour	2027
	Alex Freeney	Labour	2026
Maiden Erlegh & Whitegates	Norman Jorgensen	Conservative	2028
	Stephen Newton	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Andy Ng Siu-Hong	Liberal Democrats	2026
Norreys	Rachel Burgess	Labour	2028
	Marie-Louise Weighill	Labour	2027
	Nagi Nagella	Labour	2026
Shinfield	Sarah Bell	Labour	2028
	Andrew Gray	Labour	2027
	Vishal Srinivasan	Conservative	2026
South Lake	Kay Gilder	Conservative	2028
	Beth Rowland	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Carol Jewell	Liberal Democrats	2026
Spencers Wood & Swallowfield	Catherine Glover	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Dave Edmonds	Conservative	2027
	Stuart Munro	Conservative	2026
Thames	Sam Akhtar	Conservative	2028
	Wayne Smith	Conservative	2027
	Katrin Harding	Liberal Democrats	2026

Twyford, Ruscombe & Hurst	Stephen Conway	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Martin Alder	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Martijn Andrea	Liberal Democrats	2026
Wescott	Jane Ainslie	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Rob Comber	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Chris Cooke	Liberal Democrats	2026
Winnersh	Prue Bray	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Rachelle Shepherd-Dubey	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Paul Fishwick	Liberal Democrats	2026
Wokingham Without	Marc Brunel-Walker	Liberal Democrats	2028
	Jordan Montgomery	Liberal Democrats	2027
	Seona Turtle	Conservative	2026

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