

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

Report of the Chief Executive to the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 23 JULY, 2009

JOINT EUROPEAN AND COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS: JUNE 2009

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive a report on the administration and conduct of the elections held in June 2009.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the report be noted.

Note: In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

3. Information, Issues and Options

3.1 Background

3.1.1 Officers were charged with the administration of the joint County Council and European Parliamentary elections. The four-yearly County elections had been held back from their usual May date to allow for their combination with the European poll. The Chief Executive was the Returning Officer for the local elections and acted in a similar capacity on behalf of the Regional Returning Officer for the European elections.

3.1.2 Both polls were on Thursday, 4th June. The verification for both elections took place on Friday, 5th June, with the counts for the 12 County Divisions in Breckland following. The local count for the European Election (with Breckland being one of 47 authorities in the Eastern Region) took place on Sunday, 7th June, to coincide with the close of polling in other European Union countries.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 Elections have become more complicated since the introduction of the 2006 Electoral Administration Act, which introduced measures to increase security and reduce opportunities for electoral fraud. The process in June was made more complex by being a joint election and also by the volume of postal votes which are now issued.

3.2.2 The success of any election depends upon the co-ordination of a number of different elements and various staff and contractors carrying out the duties assigned to them. As is the case with all major elections, the election team was presented with a few detailed problems around individual postal votes, registration and polling day staffing which were either dealt with during the course of the election or followed up afterwards.

3.2.3 The Member Services Manager will be present to answer any questions.

3.3 Options

3.3.1 To accept the report

3.3.2 To make any suggestions for consideration at future elections.

3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.4.1 The objectives of both the Regional and Local Returning Officers of completing the election process in accordance with the law and Electoral Commission guidance were satisfactorily achieved. All steps in the election timetable were met and polling and counting was completed according to plan. Both the Local and Regional Returning Officers expressed themselves satisfied with the outcome, the latter pointing out that he had been able to declare the Eastern Region result an hour earlier than previously. Both Returning Officers have reviewed the process with staff and there are no outstanding issues requiring attention. The Electoral Commission is happy with the way the process was conducted in the Region. The Commission has incidentally selected the Breckland area's Returning Officer as one of those to be audited on performance standards.

4. Risk and Financial Implications

4.1 Risk

4.1.1 No risks identified.

4.2 Financial

4.2.1 None.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The report has no legal implications.

6. Other Implications

- a) Equalities: None.
- b) Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998: No direct implications in adopting this change.
- c) Section 40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: No direct implications.
- d) Human Resources: No direct implications.
- e) Human Rights: None.
- f) Other: [e.g. Children's Act 2004]: None.

7. Alignment to Council Priorities

7.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council aims and associated priorities:

- Building safer and stronger communities

8. Ward/Community Affected

8.1 All.

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Key Decision Status (Executive Decisions only): Non-key decision

Appendices attached to this report: None.