

SCOTTISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS – MAY 2017

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION AFTER COMPLETION OF THE COUNT

Introduction

Returning Officers have a statutory duty to publish a range of information about the count for each contest, with a deadline for completing the process within **one week** from the declaration of results.

With the aim of achieving a greater degree of consistency across Scotland, the Convener of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland has made a Direction¹ requiring that the undernoted reports be generated from the e-count system and published.

Information to be published

The reports to be published are:

1. Declaration of Results Report
2. Preference Summary Report
3. Transfers Report
4. Candidate Votes per Stage Report
5. Preference Profile Report
6. Election Results Report
7. First Preference Report; and
8. Preferences by Ballot Box Report.

These reports should be published to Council websites **only after the counts in all wards are concluded**, avoiding any risk to the stability, security or performance of the e-count system. Further information on all the reports is contained within the Portal and within the hard-copy Training Manual which is given to each member of staff attending training during February/March 2017.

At the conclusion of the count for the council area, the CGI Technical Manager will activate procedures to export all relevant data and the full suite of reports generated within the e-count system to the two secure hard drives that will be provided to each Council². This data transfer process is far quicker than in 2012 and the data will be structured into a series of folders to facilitate the publication requirements. The reports numbered 1 to 4, 6 and 7 above will be stored in pdf format within a “Reports for Publication” folder for easy uploading to council websites, without any further intervention.

¹ Letter from Mary Pitcaithly, 28 February 2017 - Additional Direction 3

² See ‘e-Counting 2017: Q&A’ – “Extracting Data and Report Export from the e-Counting System”

The Preference Profile Report referred to as 5 above is generated as a pure data file (in csv format) and this should be published together with a “How to understand the Voting Information” document held on the EMB website. Authorities are free to use their own contextual note as long as it is to like-effect.

The Preferences by Ballot Box Report shown as 8 above requires additional work by RO staff to ensure that ballot boxes containing fewer than 200 ballot papers are not published; thereby ensuring that an individual’s voting preferences cannot be identified. This is achieved by aggregating such boxes with another or others within the ward. The methodology to aggregate boxes is not an exact science; however ROs will have regard to the geography of the relevant areas and indeed the aggregation methodology adopted in 2012 and any subsequent by-elections where votes were counted electronically.

Two versions of this report will be provided; one in pdf format which will highlight in yellow any box with fewer than 200 ballot papers, and another in csv format. It is recommended that, in the first instance, the pdf version of the report be produced in hard copy to confirm the extent of aggregation required. In recognition of the time-consuming nature of this task utilising spreadsheets, an enhancement has been commissioned to allow this task to be undertaken using EasyPrint.

The process of uploading files and completing the aggregation process in a simple manner is fully described in Section 11 of the EasyPrint Council User Guide.

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Pentland House,
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March, 2017