

ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

REPORT e-Counting Project 2017 – Update as at November 2015

MEETING

27 November 2015

INTRODUCTION

1. This is the latest update on the current status of the preparatory work which is underway in relation to the e-Counting Project 2017.

CONTRACT UPDATE

2. An award of contract, in the form of a Single Supplier Framework Agreement, was made to CGI on 6 October 2015. Since that time there has been a considerable amount of discussion on the commercial terms of the contract between CGI and Scottish Government procurement and legal officials. It is pleasing to note that these discussions concluded on 18 November and the contract has now been signed by the Scottish Government and CGI are expected to return a signed copy on 19 November. The contract value is c£6.5m, and this includes the cost of producing both ballot papers and postal vote packs. A payment profile has been agreed, and the Scottish Government will be responsible for making payments to the supplier for Stages 1 to 3 and a small element of Stage 4. The majority of the costs of the overall contract are associated with Stage 4 (the elections themselves), and responsibility for paying the contractor for this element of the work will fall to local authorities directly, to take advantage of their VAT status. Local authorities will subsequently invoice the Scottish Government to recover the costs associated with e-counting. In accordance with the practice adopted in 2012, authorities will however be required to meet the cost of producing ballot papers, postal packs and any additional services procured at the discretion of Returning Officers. An estimate of the print element of these costs will be provided to ROs at an early date to inform 2017/18 spending plans.

MOBILISATION

- 3. Notwithstanding the delay in signing the contract, CGI have undertaken to commence elements of their mobilisation plans on an "at risk basis" to establish a count centre at Pentland House. This will allow Stage 1A of the project, technical compliance testing, to commence at the earliest opportunity. Indeed, CGI have already provided the Project Team with a document which describes the first phase of this testing which will validate the technical compliance of their solution in terms of accurately processing ballot papers. This will be followed by a series of tests to ensure the solution meets the required performance criteria and technical standards. These will be scoped-out shortly. It is anticipated that all these tests will be completed by 18 December 2015. This work will be led by Liz Ure of the Scottish Government, and the Project Team is indebted to the City of Edinburgh, Falkirk and Glasgow councils for allowing experienced ICT officers to join the Technical Assurance Group who will assist with the tests.
- 4. Further work has also been progressed in the intervening period to agree the format and frequency of documentation relating to project plans, stage plans, status reports and other documents and reporting mechanisms to assist with project management and governance arrangements.
- 5. In addition to the technical work referred to above, arrangements have been put in place to establish a User Group, which had its first meeting on 24 November. The next meeting of the Project Board will be held on 17 December 2015.

USER TRIALS

6. User Trials which constitute Stage 1B of the project are being arranged for the three week period commencing 11 January 2016. User Trials should allow Council election staff to review the e-counting system, re-familiarise themselves with it and provide the supplier team with some feedback. At the time of writing just over half of authorities have responded to the invitation to attend, with numbers of attendees varying from 3 to around 20.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7. The Board is invited to:
 - Note the current status of the different strands of the e-Counting Project 2017.

D McGregor,

Edinburgh,

19 November 2015