e-Counting for the
2017
Scottish Local Government Elections

INFORMATION BULLETIN FROM THE PROJECT TEAM
Issue 07, 28th October 2016

FOR INFO.	• **Bulletin** – this is the latest Bulletin aimed at informing the electoral community of progress with the project to deliver e-counting for the 2017 local government elections. As this project develops, further Bulletins will be issued regularly by the e-counting Project Team, whose contact details are on the following page.	
FOR INFO.	**MOCK COUNTS – SEPTEMBER 2016** • The 'Mock Count' sessions took place in September at the Dewars Centre in Perth. Around 400 officers from 30 authorities attended the above events and either participated in or observed a mock count. Thanks to everyone who took part ! • In addition to the local authority delegates, there were a number of other observers, including: the Minister for Parliamentary Business, Joe Fitzpatrick MSP; Alexander Stewart MSP MBE; as well as representatives from the Electoral Commission, the Maltese Electoral Commission and the Greater London Authority. • Alongside the Mock Counts, the e-counting Project Team also took the opportunity to undertake large-scale stress testing of the system, including tests of 200,000 ballot papers, which were carried out on three occasions. There was also a day devoted to a 'disaster recovery' exercise aimed at testing the e-counting supplier's disaster recovery procedures. Although unplanned, there was a power failure during one of the bulk tests and this provided a further opportunity to test system resilience. **e-COUNTED BY-ELECTION - GLASGOW GARSCADDEN/SCOTSTOUNHILL WARD** • The first e-counted by-election using the 2017 version of the e-count software and equipment was undertaken in the Glasgow Garscadden/Scotstounhill Ward on 6th October. The count was completed with no issues and all the new reports and data transfer solutions were used. The big highlight was the reduction in adjudication rates – these came in at just under 20%, which compares very favourably with the 2012 version which typically produced rates closer to 30% in Glasgow by-elections. There are other factors which affect adjudication rates, such as local demographic factors, number of candidates and likelihood of voter misunderstanding, but the extent of the improvement seen in Glasgow is broadly in line with test results. The 2017 solution will be used in several more by-elections during November and December and we will report on how these went in a future Bulletin.	

FOR INFO.	
	PRINTING OF BALLOT PAPERS
	EASYPRINT WORKSHOP
	• This time round, the main e-counting Framework contract includes provision for the printing of all station ballot papers and postal ballot packs. Idox are the supplier partner in charge of this element. Some authorities will already be Idox customers while others will not.
	• To help all councils get a good understanding of **EasyPrint** and related printing issues, an event has been scheduled for **16 November at Pentland House in Edinburgh**. (This is the same venue that hosted the User Trials in January). The Idox team will lead the event which will allow all councils to get the opportunity to understand their approach, ask questions and to make Idox aware of your needs. An invitation was issued to all councils by Miles Ritchie of CGI on 13 October. If you haven't received this, please let us know.
	BOX AMALGAMATION
	• One of the enhancements to the e-counting system which the Project Team had suggested was some means of automatically producing a report which amalgamates boxes of less than 200 ballot papers. Idox have been working on this and they have now produced a system change – involving EasyPrint – which meets this requirement. Details of the box amalgamation fix will be uploaded onto the **Online Portal** which will be made available to you all in the next few days. Details to follow.
	PRINT WORKING GROUP
	• However, conscious of the importance of printing issues, generally, at their last meeting on 4 October the e-counting Project Board asked that a **Print Working Group** be established. The Working Group will take the lead in assuring that all elements of ballot paper production, printing, proofing and distribution are properly addressed. The Print Working Group – which will be a sub-set of the existing User Group – is scheduled to hold its first meeting in early November prior to the above EasyPrint Workshop session. Thanks to David Miller for agreeing to host the first Print Working Group meeting in Glasgow.
	CALL-OFF CONTRACTS
	• All ROs and Elections Managers have now been provided with a copy of the 'Buyers Guide' and supporting guidance material produced by Scottish Procurement. The 'Buyers Guide' explains the means by which Services Agreements (or 'Call-Off Contracts') are drawn down from the main Framework agreement (signed between the Scottish Government and CGI). The next phase of commercial documentation will be the issue of the Services Agreement, in effect the 'Call-Off' contracts.
	• Consistent with the arrangements adopted in 2012, authorities will be issued with two invoices during Stage 4 of the e-counting project, with the first of these on 26 January and the second on 26 May 2017. The Scottish Government will reimburse

the cost of the e-counting system but not the cost of ballot papers or postal voting packs, nor any additional services procured by Returning Officers within their Services Agreement with CGI.

- Any queries on this, please contact the Scottish Government's Douglas Martin at: douglas.martin@gov.scot

For more information please contact a member of the <u>e-counting Project Team</u>:

Project Manager: **Alex Mowat** (alex.mowat@gov.scot; 0131 244 0586)
 Technical/ Supplier Liaison: **Liz Ure** (liz.ure@gov.scot; 07769 239 206)
Local Government Liaison: **Dougie McGregor** (dougie.mcgregor@edinburgh.gov.uk ; 07712 389 443)
Project Support: **Paul McGrath** (paul.mcgrath@gov.scot; 0131 244 4153)