



Designing and implementing a shared electoral service: an AEA issues paper

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This purpose of this paper is to set out a number of issues that local authorities should consider both in assessing the feasibility of creating a shared electoral service, and in designing and implementing that service.
- 1.2. Authorities should not underestimate the scale of the task, nor the amount of careful planning involved in designing and implementing an effective shared electoral service that can deliver the statutory duties of the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

2. Key issues that need to be addressed in designing and implementing a shared electoral service

- 2.1. In arriving at a decision as to the potential benefits and costs of creating a shared electoral service, the authorities concerned will need to consider and address a number of key issues.
- 2.2. This list of issues may not be exhaustive, and will certainly have different and specific implications and solutions for each shared service according to the local circumstances of the authorities concerned. The following list should provide a useful starting point and is offered on that basis:
 - **Outcomes - achieving a clear and shared description of the service**
 - **Appointment of the Electoral Registration Officer(s) (ERO) and Returning Officer(s) (RO)**
 - **Structural and funding issues**
 - **The creation of a Service Level Agreement (SLA)**
 - **Staffing and HR issues**
 - **Internal communications and dependencies**

- **Offices for the purpose of meeting statutory requirements**
- **Geography, transport and communications infrastructure, and demographics**
- **Different electoral cycles and boundaries**
- **Buildings and equipment**
- **Provision of back office services**
- **IT software, hardware and telephony**
- **Existing contractual arrangements**
- **Relationship with Town/Parish councils in each area**
- **Key partners and stakeholders across the shared service area**

3. Implementation

- 3.1. It will be vital to set up a formal Project Structure with high-level as well as 'hands on' membership from each of the local authorities involved. This might typically include a Project Board supported by a Project Team to undertake a cost/ benefit analysis, prepare and monitor plans including risk assessment and plans and generally to oversee the design and implementation of the service.
- 3.2. In particular, this will need to clearly set out both the authority of the Board to take decisions and the lines and frequency of reporting required by each of the separate authorities.

4. AEA Technical Support

- 4.1. The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) was founded in 1987 and has rapidly established itself as the professional body to represent the interests of electoral administrators in the United Kingdom. It has more than 1600 members who are primarily election professionals working in local government.
- 4.2. In addition to delivering consultancy and recruitment services, the AEA can provide specialist electoral expertise to authorities that are considering setting up a shared electoral service. If you would like to discuss how the AEA can assist you please contact **John Turner, Chief Executive of the AEA**. John can be contacted by telephone on 07774 947622 or by e-mail to john.turner@aea-elections.co.uk