

# Item 6

REPORT TO CABINET

16<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2006

REPORT OF CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE

## **Portfolio: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP**

### **ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION ACT 2006**

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to acquire the necessary software to comply with requirements of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the necessary software be purchased from Express Software Solutions Ltd. with the cost of this project being met from the 2006/07 Contingencies Fund.

#### **3. POSTAL VOTE PERSONAL IDENTIFIERS**

- 3.1 The Act and secondary legislation requires the collection of personal identifiers (P.I's) (signature and date of birth) for all existing postal and postal proxy voters. The Returning Officer will be required to check the P.I's on postal voter statements against those collected.
- 3.2 The Department for Constitutional Affairs (D.C.A.) has indicated that regulations will require the collection of P.I's to commence on 1<sup>st</sup>. January 2007 and to be concluded within 49 days. Regulations will also require the checking of at least 20% of returned postal voter statements at elections after 1<sup>st</sup>. May 2007. Approximately 11,500 electors in the Borough have currently chosen to vote by post at all elections. Without the use of appropriate computer systems the Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer (ERO/RO) cannot effectively comply with these obligations.
- 3.3 This timeframe requires that any computer based system for collection is in place before 1<sup>st</sup>. January 2007 and verification systems in place before 1<sup>st</sup>. April 2007. The D.C.A. has also indicated that within 2 years 100% of all returned postal voter statements must be verified against collected identifiers before allowing the postal votes to be included in the count stage.

#### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 On 30<sup>th</sup>. March 2006 Cabinet authorised the commissioning of a replacement electoral registration and electoral administration operating system from Express Software Solutions Ltd. The Council acted in partnership with Easington and Teesdale District Council's and as a result obtained a 10% discount on the software fee.
- 4.2 As the software identified in this report will be used in conjunction with the operating system already in use it is required to be obtained from the same supplier. This report therefore has been prepared taking into account the requirements of Contract Procedure Rule No. 8.
- 4.3 The estimated cost of obtaining the additional software is £11,400 together with ongoing maintenance costs of 20%. Provisions to require the collection of these P.I.'s and subsequent reproduction and checking at the time of voting were inserted into the Electoral Administration Bill by the House of Lords at a late stage in the Bill's Parliamentary passage. In consequence of this, the provisions could not have been catered for when implementation of the Bill was originally being budgeted.
- 4.4 The D.C.A., which has responsibility in Government for electoral policy, is therefore committed to making funding available in the following estimated amounts.

Collection- 74p per postal voter registered as such in the Council's area on 1<sup>st</sup>. December 2006. This will amount to approximately £8500 which is likely to be paid out in January 2007.

Checking- 99p per postal voter registered as such in the Council's area on 1<sup>st</sup>. December 2006 subject to a minimum of around £12000 for Authorities with at least 10,000 absent voters and a maximum of around £40,000. This is likely to be paid out in April 2007.

In total therefore the Council can expect to receive grant funding of a minimum of £20,500 to implement these requirements. Whilst this grant is also meant to cover the Council's staff input, postage and stationery it is anticipated that the software cost of £11,400 can be fully accommodated.

## 5. **CONSULTATIONS**

- 5.1 Due to the subject matter of this report no external consultations are considered appropriate.

## 6. **OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

**Links to Corporate objectives/ Values**

- 6.1 This project will assist in promoting local democracy and social inclusion.

**Legal Implications**

- 6.2 The proposal will enable the ERO/RO to comply with the requirements contained within the Electoral Administration Act and to fulfil his statutory obligations.

**Risk Management**

- 6.3 The exercise will assist in the management of risk in regard to statutory obligations.

**Health and Safety Implications**

- 6.4 No material considerations have been identified.

**Sustainability**

- 6.5 No material considerations have been identified.

**Equality and Diversity**

- 6.6 No material considerations have been identified.

**Crime and Disorder**

- 6.7 No material considerations have been identified.

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**Wards:** Not Ward Specific

**Background Papers:**

Letter from Department for Constitutional Affairs dated October 2006.  
Proposal from Express Software Solutions October 2006.

## Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>