



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Elections Update
Date:	18 th March, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Councils, together with the national referendum on the Alternative Vote System, will be held on Thursday, 5 th May, 2011.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Attached at Appendix 1 is a timetable for the local elections setting out important dates in the lead up to, during and following polling day on 5 th May.
2.2	Members are also asked to note the following significant points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At previous local elections, the nomination papers had to be delivered on one of two set days. This time around, however, nominations from prospective candidates will be acceptable on any working day from 10.00am to 4.00pm from 28th March till 6th April and from 10.00 am till 1.00pm on 7th April. Officers will be in touch with the Party Groups represented on the Council to arrange appointments for the submission of nomination papers.• Nomination Papers for the local elections may be downloaded from the Electoral Office website at http://www.eoni.org.uk/local_council_nomination_papers-3.pdf or can be collected from Room G42, the Principal Office for the purpose of the election.

2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates are advised to fill in the forms and submit them in draft, including the signatures of the proposer, seconder and attestors, to the Democratic Services Section where they will be checked. This will avoid any problems when the signed forms are submitted for nomination. • Each candidate is entitled to receive a copy of the Electoral Register for the District Electoral Area in which they are standing. These are available in electronic and/or hard copy form from Room G42, the Principal Office for the purpose of the election. • At the close of poll at 10.00pm on 5th May, all ballot boxes for the Assembly and Council elections and for the Referendum will be taken to the appropriate Count Centres where the Assembly and Referendum Counts will be held. This will mean that Belfast Council ballot boxes for the Balmoral, Court (part of), Laganbank, Lower Falls, Pottinger (part of) and Upper Falls District Electoral Areas will go to the King’s Hall, Belfast; those for the Castle, Court (part of) and Oldpark District Electoral Areas to the Valley Leisure Centre, Newtownabbey; and those for the Pottinger (part of) and Victoria District Electoral Areas to the Ards Leisure Centre, Newtownards. • At 7.30 am on Friday, 6th May the verification of all the ballot boxes for both elections and the referendum will take place in these count centres. Local Council candidates and their appropriate election and counting agents will be entitled to be present for this verification. • It is anticipated that the verification process will be completed by 1.00pm on the afternoon of 6th May. When the verification is completed, the Local Government ballot boxes will be removed with the Belfast City Council boxes being delivered to the City Hall for secure storage until Monday 9th May. • The Assembly count will commence once the verification has been completed and will continue to 11pm. If necessary, the Assembly counts will continue on Saturday, 7th May until completion. • The Referendum count will start at 4.00pm on 6th May. • The Local Council counts for the Upper Falls, Lower Falls, Oldpark, Pottinger and Victoria District Electoral Areas will commence at 9.00am on Monday, 9th May in the Great Hall and Banqueting Hall, City Hall and continue until completion. The counts for the remaining District Electoral Areas of Court, Castle, Balmoral and Laganbank will be held on Tuesday, 10th May. • Please note that, as the verification process for all the Council District Electoral Areas will have been completed on Friday, 6th May, there will be no need to repeat the exercise and the counts in the City Hall will commence with the sort of the ballot papers into the 1st preferences expressed by voters. This should mean that the counts will be finished slightly sooner than would have otherwise been the case. <p>If Members have any questions in relation to the local elections, please contact me, Jim Hanna (ext 6313) or Gareth Quinn (ext 6316).</p>
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3	Resource Implications
	None

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report.

6	Decision Tracking
No decision tracking linked to the report.	

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Local Council Election Timetable.	