



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Election Update
Date:	4th April, 2014
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (Ext 6314)

1	Relevant Background Information
	Members will be aware that the Local Elections to the Shadow Belfast District Council will be held on 22nd May, 2014. The poll will be a joint one with the European Parliamentary Election.

2	Key Issues
	<p>The timetable for the Local Elections is attached at Appendix 1 and sets out the various dates and deadlines which will be of interest to candidates standing for election.</p> <p>Members are asked to note that the election will be to the new Belfast District Council and this is the wording that will be required to be used on ballot papers and on election banners etc around the City Hall on the days of the counts. This is because the names of the 11 new Councils were set out in the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 and in our case the name chosen was Belfast District Council. It will be a matter for the Shadow Council to determine if it wishes to change the name of the new Council back to a City.</p> <p><u>Nomination Process</u></p> <p>The Notice of Election will be placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter newspapers on Monday 14th April. The delivery of nomination papers must be made between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00pm on 15th, 16th, 17th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 28th April and between the hours of 10.00am and 1.00pm on 29th April. As in previous elections, we will be using the Lavery Room for the receipt of nomination papers.</p>

Parties are requested to reserve a date and time for the lodging of their papers as the process can take quite some time to complete and this will assist in ensuring that the Deputy Returning Officer (Peter McNaney) or one of the Assistant Returning Officers (Stephen McCrory and Jim Hanna) are available to receive the papers. It would be of significant assistance if Parties were to submit the papers in draft initially so that the details can be checked and any required amendments made in advance of the formal submission.

Nomination papers, consent to nomination papers etc are contained within the Guide to Candidates document which may be obtained from the Electoral Office website at [http://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/29aa50ee-c6fb-49e3-bb91-8161c1aebd3e/Local-Council-Election-22-May-2014-Guide-for-Candidates-\(final\)](http://www.eoni.org.uk/getmedia/29aa50ee-c6fb-49e3-bb91-8161c1aebd3e/Local-Council-Election-22-May-2014-Guide-for-Candidates-(final)). For convenience, copies of the forms are attached as Appendices to the report or may be obtained from the Democratic Services offices in the City Hall upon request.

Members are reminded that no cameras will be permitted within the Lavery Room during the nomination process.

Date of Poll

The poll will be taken between the hours of 7.00am and 10.00pm on Thursday, 22nd May, 2014. Members are reminded that this will be a joint poll with the election to the European Parliament.

Overnight Verification of Unused Ballot Papers

Following the close of poll on 22nd May, the ballot boxes for the 10 District Electoral Areas in the Belfast District, together with the European ballot boxes from the Polling Places within those 10 DEAs, will be delivered to the City Hall. The verification of **unused ballot papers** for both elections will take place within the 5 count venues in the City Hall.

This process does not involve the opening of any ballot boxes but merely records the number of unused papers returned in the election stationery against the figures recorded on the Ballot Paper Accounts. Candidates, Election Agents etc will be entitled to be present during this process if they so wish and details of how to register to attend will be circulated to those persons after the nomination period ends.

It is anticipated that this process should be concluded between 2.00am and 3.00am on Friday, 23rd May.

Verification of Used Ballot Papers

The verification of the used ballot papers for both elections will commence at 8.00am on Friday, 23rd May. This process involves the 2 ballot boxes from each polling station (1 Local Council box and 1 European box) being opened and the contents sorted and counted in view of the Candidates, Election Agents and Counting Agents. Members are asked to note that the Local Council papers will be sorted and counted face up whilst the European papers will be face down.

The purpose of the process is to verify the numbers of ballot papers found in each box and to check this against the Ballot Paper Account and the verification statement of unused ballot papers. The verification of the DEAs of Botanic, Ormiston, Oldpark, Collin and Titanic will take place first and when completed the verification for the DEAs of Balmoral, Black Mountain, Castle, Court and Lisnasharragh will follow immediately afterwards. It is anticipated that this process will be completed between 2.00pm and 3.00pm that day.

Once the verification process has been completed, we will commence the actual Local Council counts for the DEAs of Balmoral, Black Mountain, Castle, Court and Lisnasharragh as follows:

Banqueting Hall – Black Mountain – Count Controller Gareth Quinn
Reception Room – Balmoral – Count Controller Andrew Wilson
Great Hall (1) – Castle – Count Controller Ronan Cregan
Great Hall (2) – Court – Count Controller Mark McBride
Great hall (3) – Lisnasharragh – Count Controller Rose Crozier

The first stage of each count will be to carry out the initial sort of ballot papers according to first preference votes and to identify any invalid papers. This stage can take a couple of hours to complete and therefore we may not be in a position to announce the total valid vote and establish the electoral quota until near to tea time on Friday. Each count will continue stage by stage where either candidates' surpluses will be transferred or candidates will be excluded until the required number of Councillors have been elected. Local election rules indicate that a count should ideally not continue after 11.00pm. Should any count not be completed by then an assessment will be undertaken as to how long it might take to finish the process and, if that time is not excessive and if the candidates and agents agree, the count will continue until completion.

The counts for the 5 DEAs of Botanic, Ormiston, Oldpark, Collin and Titanic will commence at 9.00am on Saturday, 24th May as follows:

Banqueting Hall – Ormiston – Count Controller Gareth Quinn
Reception Room – Botanic – Count Controller Andrew Wilson
Great Hall (1) – Oldpark – Count Controller Ronan Cregan
Great Hall (2) – Collin – Count Controller Mark McBride
Great hall (3) – Titanic – Count Controller Rose Crozier

The same process as followed for the counts on Friday will be undertaken with the exception that there will not be a separate verification process as that will have been carried out on the Friday morning. Accordingly, it is anticipated that all counts should be completed by 5.00pm on the Saturday.

Facilities during the Verification and Counts

The City Hall will continue to operate a full working day for staff on Friday, 23rd May. However, access to the building by the public will be prohibited except for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages service. All access to the City Hall will be by the rear entrance at Donegall Square South and all other doors will be locked.

Only persons who have been authorised will be permitted access to the relevant count area and candidates and agents will be asked to submit the names of

	<p>those persons in due course.</p> <p>There is extreme pressure on car parking in the City Hall but all existing Members of Council will be able to park in the City Hall courtyard on the days of the counts. No other requests for car parking spaces will be able to be granted.</p> <p>The Bobbin Restaurant will be closed to the public but will remain open and serve a range of hot and cold food during the counts. There will also be a tea, coffee and sandwich facility in the East Entrance area.</p> <p><u>Contacts for Election Information</u></p> <p>The Principal Office for the purpose of the election is the Members' Support Office, Room G42. This office will be able to issue any papers that candidates might need.</p> <p>If anyone has any questions about the election process they should contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen McCrory, Senior Assistant Returning Officer, Room G37, City Hall. Telephone 02890 270382. Email mccrorys@belfastcity.gov.uk or • Jim Hanna, Assistant Returning Officer, Room G39, City Hall. Telephone 02890 270549. Email hannajim@belfastcity.gov.uk.
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3	Resource Implications
	The costs of running the Local Elections have been budgeted for over the last 4 years and costs will be met from within existing budgets.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	There are not any equality or good relations considerations connected to this report.

5	Recommendations
	The Committee is requested to note the information.

6	Abbreviations
	DEA – District Electoral Area

6	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Election Timetable</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Nomination Form</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Consent to Nomination Form</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Nomination of Election Agent Form</p>

Appendix 5 – Request to Use Party Description and Emblem Form