

Appendices:
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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	European Elections count venue 2014
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Committee Meeting Date:	25 th March 2014
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Chief Executive
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mackintosh

1. Purpose

1.1 To advise the Committee of the new location to hold the European Elections count in 2014 and for members to comment and ask questions on this matter.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To note the change of counting venue from Lings Forum to Royal & Derngate, and for members to advise of any concerns or questions on this matter.

2.2 To note that a further report will be brought forward to this Committee evaluating the operation of the venue after May 22nd/23rd and 25th, and will also consider options to use the same venue for the Borough Council elections 2015, and related options for the next General Election.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The Council have previously held the election counts at the Lings Forum Leisure Centre in Brookside Ward, Northampton. However, following the evaluation of options, the Returning Officer is relocating to a new venue for the

European election verification and count. These will take place at the Royal & Derngate theatre complex, located in the Cultural Quarter of the town, in close proximity to the Guildhall.

Currently, main election counts take place at Lings Forum which is located approximately 4 miles from the Guildhall. The Royal & Derngate is located much closer to the Guildhall and has excellent facilities. These include an excellent communications area where the media will be able to carry out their functions within allocated spaces, better facilities for staff and candidates, and a much more central area for polling staff to drop off ballot boxes. There is also the potential to speed up verification processes as such a central location would aid the fast delivery of ballot boxes after close of poll.

Other advantages have been identified such as the reduction in travel expenditure on staff, and as postal votes would be transported to the Guildhall and kept secure overnight, this would reduce the costs of security and other operational costs such as car park arrangement at Lings.

No decision has yet been taken with regard to the Borough Council elections in 2015 but if the forthcoming European election verification and count work well at this new venue then a change of Borough Council election verification and count venue to the Royal and Derngate is likely. To enable this, a full evaluation will be produced after the European Parliamentary elections and there will be a further report to this Committee.

The General Election is also planned to take place on the same day as the Borough Council elections. The Acting Returning Officer will be responsible for the Northampton North and Northampton South constituencies. Again, an evaluation of the best verification and count venue or venues for the two constituencies will be undertaken based on the experience of using the Royal and Derngate this year.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

- 4.1.1 There is potential for there to be a significant reduction in costs as identified in the body of the report due to operational benefits to the electoral process.
- 4.1.2 A key risk to be evaluated at the European Parliamentary elections will be the capacity of the venue, particularly whether the venue would be able to cope sufficiently well with a combined and more complex election as planned in 2015

4.2 Legal

- 4.2.1 There are no legal implications. The decision on venue is a matter for the Local Returning Officer in liaison with the Regional Returning Officer.

4.3 Equality

4.3.1 None specifically arising from this report. The Royal and Derngate has high standards of accessibility.

4.4 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.4.1 Northampton Leisure Trust and the Regional Returning Officer have been consulted on this proposal and raised no objections.

4.5 Other Implications

4.5.1 None

5. Background Papers

5.1 None.

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