

**Final report of the Returning Officer on the delivery of the May 2015 Elections – Henley, Oxford West and Abingdon and Wantage parliamentary constituencies; South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts; and various parish and town councils**

**September 2015**

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## Foreword

This is my final report into the delivery of the May 2015 elections. It is an updated version of the interim report I published in June. The report is substantially the same as the earlier version but now reflects feedback from the post-election consultation with staff, candidates, agents and the public. It also takes account of the Electoral Commission's assessment that I failed to meet its performance standard in respect of the allocation of staff to the Didcot Ladygrove polling stations. councils in the autumn. It is not possible to produce it before then because that report will include the election accounts for the district and parish council elections and these will not be finalised for a couple of months. In the meantime, therefore I am publishing an interim report with my initial review findings. The final report will also take account of the feedback from the recently closed consultation on how the election went.

Notwithstanding the Electoral Commission's view in relation to Didcot Ladygrove, my overall assessment is that the elections went well. I did not receive any election writs and at no stage did I hear any suggestion that one might be served. This is always the acid test for a returning officer.

In assessing performance it is important to set the May elections in context. They were by some margin the most complex ever delivered in South and Vale. In the national context, this was the first time parliamentary, district and parish council elections have taken place on the same day (until a recent law change parish council elections were deferred when they fell on the same day as parliamentary elections). As well as adding complexity to pre-election tasks such as taking nominations, issuing postal votes and so forth, it also resulted in the highest turnouts for district elections for many years and parish elections ever. This caused some issues on the day with queues at polling stations as well as longer counts than have historically been the case.

Still in the national context, these were the first elections run under the new individual elector registration (IER) regime. This created some challenges as people already on the electoral register lost entitlements to postal and proxy votes because they had failed to update their details as required under IER, whilst some people looking to register locally for the first time failed to complete the process and had no entitlement to vote at all. These were problems common to all returning officers.

In addition, at the local level, we had additional challenges created by the decision to move to a new electoral software system last autumn. Although I remain entirely satisfied that this was the right decision (because all involved had lost confidence in the previous system) it meant that staff were learning as they went along and led directly to a problem with the issue of some postal votes to overseas voters.

## Background

1. The councils are responsible for electoral registration i.e. ensuring that people are on the electoral register and entitled to vote. They are required to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), currently the Chief Executive, who is responsible for delivering this function.
2. The councils appoint a Returning Officer (RO), who is responsible for the delivery of district and parish elections together with other polls that may take place from time to time e.g. neighbourhood planning referenda. This is also currently the Chief Executive. The council's Returning Officer automatically becomes the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) responsible for running parliamentary elections, Local Returning Officer for European and Police and Crime Commissioner elections and Counting Officer for referenda. For simplicity, references in this report to the RO also cover any activities he may have been undertaking as the ARO.
3. Once appointed the RO is answerable to the courts rather than the council, which is an important distinction from the ERO role. However, given that most members of the public do not understand this distinction and hold the council to account for the conduct of elections it is essential that the RO keeps the council well informed about how elections have gone and retains the confidence of elected members, hence part of the reason for this report.

## Electoral registration

4. The 2015 elections were run against the backdrop of the biggest change to electoral registration since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1928. Historically, registration has taken place by household. In other words one person in a household could register everyone else living in that household. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 changed all that by introducing IER, whereby each person in a household must register individually. Additionally, whereas under the previous system registration forms were taken pretty much at face value, the new law requires provision of some form of identification (most commonly a national insurance (NI) number) to enable us to verify that the person registering is who they say they are.
5. Because of concerns that the 2015 general election could be held against a backdrop of a large fall in elector numbers (due to failure to register under IER), the Government determined that we should work to a hybrid system, whereby anyone on the 2014 register who had not registered under IER was automatically carried forward to the 2015 register. These people, however, lost their entitlement to a postal or proxy vote. It is worth noting that there will be no carry forward as we produce the 2016 register and this could result in a reduction in numbers on the electoral register.

6. In South and Vale the challenges of electoral registration were exacerbated by problems with our long standing supplier of electoral software. It appeared to be struggling with the changes resulting from IER and staff encountered numerous issues as they tried to roll out the new arrangements. This culminated in a decision to change to a different software supplier and package, Xpress, in autumn 2014. The new system has proved to be much more user friendly and all concerned are agreed that it was the right decision, but the timing was not ideal.
7. The cut-off date for registering to vote was the 20 April and we then had a further week to verify that the person was entitled to be on the register. In the last month we received over 21,000 requests to register of which 932 were received in the last 24 hours up to the close of registration. In many cases people used online registration and if their NI number matched Department for Work and Pension (DWP) records registration was automatic. A significant number, however, filled in paper forms that the registration team had to process manually. Pleasingly, all registration forms were processed by the deadline.
8. Verification work continued throughout the week following the registration deadline. This involved finding some means of verifying those for whom the DWP could not provide a match through their NI number, using various data sources, such as council tax records, and in a number of cases going back to individuals (sometimes on more than one occasion) to ask for additional identifiers. In the end around 100 people who had submitted registration forms were not included on the register for the elections because we were unable to adequately verify them. I consider that, given the volume of last minute registrations, this was a very acceptable outcome. I am satisfied that everyone who was excluded was approached by the registration team and had the opportunity to provide the information needed to successfully register.
9. One area for improvement going forward is in the organisation of the registers, particularly in rural parishes where there is less street naming and numbering. Given the time pressures the team was working under it was not possible to spend as much time as desirable reviewing the registers to ensure that properties were in a logical order. This created some difficulties for canvassers from political parties and also presiding officers on the day of the elections as they tried to find electors who had come to vote without their poll card.

#### **Run up to the opening of nominations**

10. The fire at the Crowmarsh offices in January caused a significant amount of disruption, with some paper records e.g. electoral registration forms, being lost and computer systems being down for nearly two weeks. Once systems were up and running again the elections team was working in cramped conditions in Abbey House, with only limited access to terminals. January was also a critical time for completing the community governance (changing the boundaries of

some parish councils) and polling place (where people vote) reviews and determining polling districts (a defined geographical area that enables allocation of voters to a specific polling place). Although we made light of the issues, in truth this created a much bigger challenge than we acknowledged at the time. It made it particularly difficult to produce the March electoral register (which was critical for political parties as their mailing lists use the data from this version). The reason for this was that the March register was the first one based on the new polling districts and the work involved in setting these up was much more time consuming than expected. That loss of capacity in January carried through directly to March.

11. The creation of the new register had two unexpected benefits, both directly related to the fact that Xpress links to the councils' GIS system. First, it highlighted that a number of properties (and hence the voters living in them) had historically been placed in the wrong parish for electoral purposes. We were aware that there were some errors, most probably dating back to 1974 when the councils were formed, but this was the first occasion where it had been possible to identify them on mass. In total we identified around 150 properties (c300 voters) whom we moved from one parish to another.
12. The second benefit was that it highlighted a number of properties on the electoral register that appeared not to be registered for council tax purposes. As a pilot, I undertook a data matching exercise in one small rural parish, which identified two properties where there were voters but no council tax was being paid. These were followed up and both properties are now recorded for council tax purposes. Work is now in hand to carry out a more comprehensive data matching exercise.

### **Nominations**

13. In total I received over 1,350 nominations for the various elections held on 7 May. These nominations were compressed into a two week window and at times queues formed and led to some frustration amongst candidates and agents. Although we offered an appointment system, many did not use this and, hence, it became quite difficult to honour appointments. I will consider whether to continue offering appointments prior to opening nominations for the next district and parish elections in 2019.
14. The elections team drafted in staff from other parts of the council to take nominations. This was intended to ease pressure on the elections team and in that sense was successful. What was less successful was that some of those taking nominations made errors in the initial data entry and these automatically carried forward to drafts of statements of nomination and draft ballot papers. This made the task of proof reading much more onerous and time consuming than expected. Whilst the principle of the approach worked, the learning point

for four years time is to spend more time on training those taking nominations and emphasising the importance of accuracy.

### **Period to close of registration and applications for postal votes**

15. This was a particularly busy period as people became more aware of the impending elections and sought to register or obtain a postal vote. In the main the elections team coped well with the volume of requests, turning around paper applications in good time. Telephone answering suffered at times with the voicemail message box occasionally full, sometimes containing two or three messages from the same person who was frustrated because they had not had a call back. In the main, however, there were no significant problems.
16. In this period the electoral services team leader resigned and left with immediate effect. Fortunately, by this stage we had sourced a very experienced electoral administrator on a consultancy basis who proved invaluable, particularly with her knowledge of Xpress and general appreciation of the various tasks involved in delivering large scale elections. We have now secured her services as interim team leader until June 2016.

### **Issuing of postal votes**

17. With a couple of exceptions covered below, the issuing of postal votes went smoothly. We issued two postal vote packs, one for the parliamentary and one for the district/parish elections. In total this amounted to a little over 57,000 postal vote packs. Our printer dispatched the parliamentary postal vote packs for those who were registered before 1 March two weeks before the elections. District/parish packs followed 10 days before the election. These times compare very favourably with previous issues. Those who had requested a postal vote after the 1 March received their postal vote in a second mail out, which was closer to polling day.
18. Within the South and Vale area there were virtually no issues with regard to postal votes. Calls relating to non-arrival were low by historical standards and most postal vote packs had been returned and processed well before polling day. The only issue of note was an error by our printer in the second mail out of district/parish ballot papers whereby ballot papers for Watlington parish were erroneously sent to voters in North Hinksey and Wheatley. The numbers involved were low, about 70 in each case, and the error was quickly identified and rectified (by hand delivery of replacement packs), although this didn't stop a few voters in Wheatley returning completed ballot papers for the Watlington parish election! Needless to say these were disregarded.
19. There were two more significant problems that do need reporting. The first relates to overseas voters (who were only entitled to vote in the parliamentary

election). Due to an error, we did not forward the details of the 199 overseas voters who have postal votes (spread across the three constituencies) to our printers, hence their postal votes were never mailed out. The error was very unfortunate but, in mitigation, staff were all getting used to a new software system that they had never used before to deliver an election.

20. In remediation we re-issued a few postal votes (eight) but, given the logistics, this was never going to be a feasible option in many cases. Rather, we offered proxy votes and in 68 cases these were taken up. It is very difficult to gauge how many people who might otherwise have voted were denied the opportunity to do so. At the very most it would be 123 but, more probably, it was somewhere between 10 and 20 per constituency.
21. The second problem related to the second issue of postal votes in Oxford City, which involved around 200 voters (these were voters in the Oxford West and Abingdon parliamentary election only; there were no local elections in Oxford). It appears that we did not receive data from the city council to pass on to our printers, although we cannot be absolutely sure as we had no system in place to confirm what we had received.
22. In remediation we worked with the city council's elections team to re-issue postal votes or arrange proxy votes and around 180 of the 200 affected voters took advantage of this. There was some initial confusion over who was going to deal with the re-issues, (which in law are the responsibility of the RO conducting the election) which led to frustration amongst those affected; in the end we both did and this seemed to work effectively.
23. I have agreed with the city council's RO that we will put a joint protocol in place before the next parliamentary election to govern a) monitoring systems at both ends to ensure that the city council has included all necessary data on transmission and that we have confirmed that we have received all the information we need and b) how to deal with any issues that arise over non-delivery of postal votes.
24. Although this problem was unfortunate, the apparent 90 per cent return suggests very few if any voters were disenfranchised, which is the most important thing.
25. I do not under estimate the frustration caused to individual voters when their postal vote does not arrive. Although the number we failed to issue was small (less than one per cent of the total), for those individuals it is very annoying and time consuming to resolve and I apologise unreservedly to them. I was pleased, however, with the remediation action that the team took to ensure that, ultimately, virtually all of those people who wanted to vote were able to do so.
26. Some will recall that in 2011 we had to deal with a major failure by the print company we had appointed. It is therefore heartening to be able to report that

Print Image (who were not the printers in 2011) did an overall very good job, met most deadlines and made just one mistake, covered above, in the issuing of postal votes. It also delivered all ballot papers for polling day in good time, which enabled the preparation of ballot boxes to go smoothly.

### **Polling Day**

27. Given the volumes of both voters and ballot papers, polling day itself ran remarkably smoothly. All polling stations opened on time and without incident. It was obvious from early in the day that the turnout would be close to that experienced five years ago for the general election and polling station inspectors quickly identified potential pinch points.
28. The elections office coped well with the volume of enquiries received on polling day from presiding officers, agents and voters. There was an efficient call handling operation in place and most calls were answered and dealt with immediately. Some calls went to voice mail – all of these received a ring back within an hour or so, most in a much shorter period of time. Email enquiries were also processed quickly.
29. The only issue related to contact with the Cherwell election office (parts of both the Henley and Oxford West and Abingdon constituencies fall in Cherwell district). The elections team and a number of presiding officers tried unsuccessfully to get through to the office, which offered no voicemail option. Cherwell's RO has acknowledged that its control centre was unable to deal with the volume of calls received due to the complexity of the elections and is reviewing arrangements for future elections, including the use of voicemail.
30. A number of polling stations had queues periodically throughout the day. We expected this and kept an active eye on how things were developing. It is worth emphasising that the maximum number of voters allocated to a polling station was 1800, which was 700 below the maximum recommended by the Electoral Commission.
31. What became obvious fairly quickly was that the major issues with queues were at polling stations where three elections were taking place (parliamentary, district, parish).

### **Willowbrook Leisure Centre - Didcot**

32. By 2100 hours, one hour before close of poll, we were satisfied that with one exception queues had either gone or were sufficiently small that the presiding officer at the polling station could manage the situation and close on time. The one exception was at Willowbrook leisure centre on the Ladygrove estate, which was housing three polling stations for Didcot North East ward. Originally we had

intended to place the three stations in Didcot Football Club clubhouse but this was not available.

33. By 2130 we had three polling station inspectors on site dealing with queue management. We had also notified the local police who attended to assist with ensuring only those entitled to vote through being in the queue at 2200, did so.
34. The polling station inspectors reported back that people in the queue were generally good natured and showed tremendous patience. They considered that the presence of the police was helpful in this respect. Eventually all of those who waited were able to vote, with the last person doing so at around 2315. Undoubtedly, a few people who might otherwise have voted did not do so because they were not prepared to queue but it is impossible to quantify how many this might have been.
35. Reviewing matters after the event we have concluded that the problems at Willowbrook resulted from a combination of three factors:
  - staff had to issue three ballot papers, with those for the district and parish elections being quite large. Inevitably this meant issuing was slower and people took longer to complete their votes with a consequent knock-on effect on throughput
  - the particular demographics of the Ladygrove estate, with a high proportion of working age people in employment, meant that more people chose to exercise the right to vote first thing in the morning and in the evening than in other locations. This is supported by the observation that during the day queues were modest for most of the time
  - the accommodation was inadequate and unsuitable for three polling stations. Access to the building is constricted and the interior layout not conducive to processing 4,000 plus voters. The late switch from the football club was unhelpful
36. Since the publication of my interim report the Electoral Commission has published its assessment of the performance of returning officers at the 2015 elections. In relation to my role as returning officer for South Oxfordshire it concludes that I did not meet its performance standard regarding the allocation of staff to polling stations in respect of Willowbrook. It states:

*“In South Oxfordshire a number of voters at two polling stations had a significant wait before being able to cast their vote. We concluded that the RO did not meet one of the elements of performance standard 1 as the Commission’s recommended ratios on the allocation of staff to polling stations were not followed for this particular polling place. The impact on electors was significant; whilst the overall number cannot be quantified it is likely that a number of electors did not vote as a result of this issue. We consider that some electors*

*were not able to vote easily nor did they receive a high quality service because they had to queue for a long time in order to vote.”*

37. I am disappointed with the findings of the Electoral Commission. Its performance standards are not binding and I need to exercise judgement in whether or not to follow each one. Regarding ratios of staff to polling stations its standard is that a polling station with more than 1500 voters should have a second poll clerk. At Willowbrook each polling station had a little under 1800 voters and we provided five poll clerks – one for each station and two to be shared by the two presiding officers as they saw fit. So, in relation to the Electoral Commission’s standard I was effectively one-third of a person short in each case.
38. More importantly I took the same view regarding allocation of polling clerks at a number of other venues with multiple polling stations without any issues. I capped the number of voters allocated to a polling station at 1800 and provided additional capacity to deal with throughput as appropriate to the particular location. If I had followed the Electoral Commission’s standard to the letter I would have both incurred additional cost and struggled to find sufficient suitable people.
39. My assessment is that queues at Willowbrook were as a result of the factors identified in paragraph 35, not the allocation of poll clerks. I do not consider that an additional poll clerk at Willowbrook would have made any noticeable difference to throughput. By 2100, because one polling station had no queue, the additional poll clerks were both working at the two stations with queues but it made no difference.
40. The Willowbrook experience provides some valuable lessons, although it is worth bearing in mind that this three way poll combination is not due to happen again for 20 years. We will review polling places and polling stations in the Didcot North East ward before the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2016.

### **The counts**

41. Before going into detail on each count it is worth commenting on the count venue. Because of the scale of the elections I took the decision to use the indoor tennis centre in Abingdon for the first time. I also appointed a Count Venue Manager to deal with all the logistics relating to the venue and the equipment needed to undertake the counts.
42. Feedback on the venue was overwhelmingly positive. The hall was spacious with plenty of circulation space; the drop-off arrangements for the ballot boxes worked well; car parking arrangements were good; IT all functioned well; media facilities were good. Delegating the venue management worked very well.

### **Verification and parliamentary count**

43. The law requires that the RO must take reasonable steps to begin counting the votes in a parliamentary election within four hours of the close of poll. However, prior to starting to count votes it is necessary to verify all of the ballot papers. This was a particularly complex task on this occasion because of the mix of different elections. This included verifying ballot boxes for the Cherwell district and parish elections that took place within the Oxford West and Abingdon constituency (there were none in the area of Cherwell that falls in the Henley constituency).
44. Verification of ballot papers is little understood by those not immersed in electoral processes but is absolutely critical in ensuring that there is a control total. In simple terms it involves confirming that the number of ballot papers received in each ballot box accords with the number that the presiding officer (the person in charge of a polling station) says were issued. This means that when the votes are counted the count total can be compared to the verification total to identify any discrepancies. In most cases, any discrepancies are of little importance because of the size of majorities, but where there are only a few votes between candidates any discrepancy takes on a much greater significance.
45. In this instance the verification process took a long time, as expected, because in most polling stations we were running two or three elections simultaneously and had the contents of about 800 ballot boxes to verify. We could not start the parliamentary count until we had verified most ballot boxes – in part because we had to ensure that a parliamentary ballot paper had not been erroneously placed in a district or parish ballot box.
46. I did not keep a precise note of when the three parliamentary counts commenced but it was between 0300 and 0400 on the Friday morning. Once the counts were underway they were largely uneventful and the RO declared the results between 0615 and 0710. My estimate beforehand was 0600, so these timings were broadly in line with expectations.
47. As required by legislation I wrote to the Electoral Commission explaining why I failed to start counting votes within four hours of the close of poll. Central to my comments was that the requirements are unrealistic where a parliamentary election is combined with an all-out district election and numerous parish council elections. I understand that a number of other returning officers also failed to commence their counts before 0200 on the Friday and wrote similarly. To date I have had no response.

### **District council counts**

48. The district council counts commenced at 1400 on Friday. The counts themselves were uneventful, with very few close results and no significant

discrepancies emerging between verification and count totals. The three member wards in South Oxfordshire (of which there were four) unsurprisingly proved to be the most complex; Henley in particular because of the number of candidates.

49. The publication of results on the councils' websites worked very well. A significant amount of time had been invested in making sure that the website could handle the high number of hits expected and this proved time well spent.
50. The counts finished later than I expected. I recall that the counts were completed around 2030, although some have suggested that they went on beyond 2100. In any event, this was some time beyond my estimate of 1800. There is no obvious reason for the difference, I put it down to over-optimism on my part (the Head of Legal and Democratic Services consistently thought 2000 was a more realistic estimate). In hindsight, it is probable that a different method of counting the votes in the three member wards would have speeded things up but this is unlikely to have saved more than 30 minutes to one hour.

#### **Parish council counts**

51. The parish council counts took place on Saturday starting at 1000. Twenty-eight were carried out in Abingdon, seven in Thame and five in Henley. This honoured an undertaking I gave following the 2011 elections to devolve parish counts where there was a demand and it was practical to do so.
52. Again the counts proved largely uneventful. There was a tied vote for the final seat representing Henley South, which resulted in a recount. The recount produced the same figures and the deputy returning officer in charge of the count drew lots to determine the successful candidate. The parish counts in Abingdon and Thame were completed shortly after 1400, which was ahead of schedule. That in Henley concluded a little after 1500.
53. I consider that devolving the counts was largely successful. There was an issue with postal votes for two parish elections being found in Abingdon when the counts were taking place in Thame and Henley (one each). Fortunately this was spotted early, the votes were counted in Abingdon, rung through and added to the total. If the exercise is repeated in four years time additional checks will be implemented to avoid a repeat. On the positive side, it made it easier for those wishing to observe the counts to attend and it also spread the workload. Realistically, given the need to have experienced staff running each count centre, three is probably the maximum number that it would be sensible to accommodate.
54. Finally, I received some feedback that the district and parish counts could have been better organised (and completed more quickly) because there were times when count staff were sitting around doing nothing. Whilst I accept that there

are always opportunities to improve processes and efficiency, these comments betray a general lack of observers understanding of the count process. Particularly in wards where more than one councillor is being elected there is a significant amount of checking that has to take place before the RO can announce a result. It is undesirable for the team that have undertaken that count to start a new one in case an issue arises that requires a recount. In this respect I operate no differently than his counterparts throughout the country.

### **Post count issues**

55. Although for politicians the announcement of the results pretty much ends the electoral process, for the elections team there is still much to do. Deposits have to be returned, staff have to be paid, parish councils have to be invoiced for their share of election costs and village halls and the like have to be paid for. On top of that there is a myriad of returns required by the Electoral Commission and Government departments, not least the accounts for the three parliamentary elections.
56. Two main issues have arisen so far since the elections. The repayment of deposits to parliamentary candidates did not go particularly smoothly. Whereas historically the RO has had a separate bank account and has repaid deposits by cheque, this time the accounts are being dealt with through the council's financial system and deposits were returned through BACS payments. There were various errors in the run up to making these payments resulting in delays, which caused frustration to some candidates and agents, for which I have apologised. For 2020 a clearly mapped out process needs implementing.
57. Much more positively, we contracted with a payroll company that specialises in election payments and this has worked extremely well. Most staff have now been paid, more quickly than previously, and the volume of complaints about errors, particularly relating to taxation, are much lower than we have experienced in the past. All staff data has been entered onto Xpress, which will simplify matters in the future.
58. Although I had originally intended to include the district election accounts as part of this report, they are not yet finalised. This is not unusual – we have until November to complete the parliamentary accounts and we cannot finalise those for the district until these are signed off. The account will now be subject of a future report to the Community Governance and Electoral Matters Committee of each council.

### **Results of consultation**

59. There is a full report on the post-election consultation available separately to this one. The issues raised in the consultation largely mirror those already identified – problems with the issue of a small number of postal votes to overseas voters

and residents of Oxford, and queues at the Willowbrook polling stations figure large. There are also a series of comments, often just from one or two individuals, that are helpful in terms of future planning for elections. There is nothing in the consultation responses on a specific issue that causes me to change my view from that stated in my interim report.

## Conclusion

60. Overall, considering the scale of the elections and the challenges that the election team faced in the run-up to their delivery, everything passed off very smoothly. There were a couple of unfortunate issues relating to the delivery of postal votes, and the team worked hard to rectify them with good success. All of the affected voters only had votes for the parliamentary election and none of them lived in South or Vale.
61. Notable successes were the performance of the print company, the lack of any issues with ballot papers, the handling of enquiries on election day, the count venue and the management of the overnight count. As ever, some learning points have arisen and the main ones are covered in this report.
62. Key action points going forward, in approximate time order, are:
  - re-organise the electoral registers in rural parishes to put properties in a more logical order in time for police and crime commissioner elections in May 2016
  - review voting arrangements in Didcot North East ward before the police and crime commissioner elections in 2016
  - put in place additional checks to ensure despatch of postal votes to overseas voters in time for the EU referendum
  - improve training of staff taking nominations for district and parish elections in time for 2019
  - decide whether to run an appointments system for nominations in 2019
  - review options for counting votes in multi-member wards to settle on the most efficient option in time for district and parish elections in 2019
  - review whether to devolve parish counts again and, if so, put better processes in place to ensure all votes for a particular parish are kept together in time for the 2019 parish elections
  - put in place protocols for data transfer with both Oxford and Cherwell in time for parliamentary elections in 2020
  - put efficient systems in place for reimbursement of candidates deposits in time for the 2020 parliamentary elections
63. Putting the issues experienced nationally to one side, those specific to South and Vale were largely as a result of new arrangements and processes and the measures outlined above should prevent these problems occurring again in the future.

