

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 9 JULY 2010

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**Title:**

**REPLACEMENT OF ELECTORAL REGISTRATION AND ELECTION  
MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllrs Robert Knowles and Stephen O'Grady]  
[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Note pursuant to Section 100B(5) of the Local Government Act 1972**

An annexe to this report contains exempt information by virtue of which the public is likely to be excluded during the item to which the report relates, as specified in Paragraph 3 of the revised Part of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information.

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**Summary and purpose:**

This report outlines the process for replacing and improving the electoral registration and election management software used by the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for all types of elections.

The system will have to be replaced to a tight timescale because of the need to start the electoral registration canvass for 2010 in September.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

Electoral registration is a key part of involving people in the democratic process and encouraging electoral turnout and producing a quick and accurate result at election counts increases confidence in the democratic process.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

Having suitably flexible electoral registration software can help improve registration levels which means difficult to reach groups can be included in the electoral register.

**Climate Change implications:**

This report does not have any direct climate change implications.

**Resource / Value for Money implications:**

Indicative quotes have been obtained from the two market- leading companies. The details are included in an (Exempt) Annexe to this report. These figures show that

the ongoing revenue cost of the new system will be able to be contained within the existing revenue budget for the current system. There is also a one-off capital cost associated with the acquisition of the new system and there is no capital budget identified currently. It is proposed that the cost is met from the unallocated 'urgent schemes' budget of £160,000 included in the approved capital programme.

### **Legal Implications:**

Having a robust electoral registration and electoral management system ensures that the Council follows all statutory procedures correctly and is not open to any legal proceedings.

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### **Introduction**

1. The Council last replaced its electoral management software approximately twelve years ago. The system that was being used was then upgraded around two years ago and this system had some initial teething problems.
2. The electoral management software market has moved on significantly in the twelve years and this replacement has given the opportunity to review the market leaders in electoral management software. The system will offer new functionality and prove more robust in dealing with increasingly complex measures required to deal with postal votes and protect against any possibility of electoral fraud.

### **Electoral Registration and Electoral Management Processes:**

3. Over the last ten years, the Government has made significant changes in electoral registration and electoral management processes, with the aim of increasing democratic involvement.
  4. As a result, the software dealing with registration and electoral management has had to become increasingly sophisticated and it is likely that the coalition government will continue with initiatives to encourage voter registration, which may include individual voter registration, and this will require very sophisticated and flexible software.
  5. Waverley's current electoral registration levels are very high, around 95%, and in the upper quartile. Similarly, Waverley's electoral turnout at the Parliamentary election was very high and any software system has to be able to support this very good level of performance.
  6. The market for electoral management software has contracted, as the systems have had to deal with increasing government initiatives and additional complexity. Officers have established that there are effectively now only two leading companies offering this specialist product each with a significant share of the market. Details of these are set out in the (Exempt) Annexe.
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7. The estimated level of expenditure required would normally need the Council to obtain three tenders for the system, but as there are only effectively two systems capable of dealing with the complexity of present and future regulations, it is proposed to only invite tenders from these two only. Prior to inviting tenders, officers will agree evaluation criteria to determine which tender gives Waverley the best value solution to the Council's current and future needs. Officers will also undertake the appropriate financial checks on the companies.
8. As explained above, elections are likely to become increasingly complex in the future and the ability to respond to this will form part of the selection process. Officers would seek to agree contract terms with the preferred supplier that are robust but flexible to meet the Council's future needs. The Government has just announced that, subject to Parliamentary approval, a referendum will be held in 2011 on 5th May, the same day as the combined Waverley Borough Town and Parish Council polls. This will place additional demands on the electoral software system.

### **Contract Procedure Rules**

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9. Inviting tenders from only two companies will require approval from the Executive of a waiver under Contract Procedure Rule 3.1 on the grounds of the limited market for this type of software.

### **Conclusion**

10. Waverley currently has a very good performance record on both electoral registration and elections and it is timely now to seek an electoral registration and election management software package which is capable of dealing with future complexities and can maintain a high level of performance. The system has to be in place to start this year's electoral registration canvass in September.

### **Recommendation**

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The Executive is recommended:

1. to agree a waiver under Contract Procedural Rule 3.1 as set out in paragraph 8 above and invite the companies listed in (Exempt) Annexe 1 to tender for the supply and support of the new election management system;
  2. that the capital costs be met from the unallocated emergency schemes budget identified in the approved 2010/11 capital programme, up to the amount indicated in the (Exempt) Annexe; and
  3. that the Chief Executive be authorised to make the final selection of the package and to agree the terms and duration of the contract in time for implementation in September.
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## Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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