

## LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

<b>REPORT:</b>	<b>GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>5 November 2024</b>	
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>Review of the General Election in Croydon July 2024</b>	
<b>CORPORATE DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR:</b>	<b>KATHERINE KERSWELL, CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND RETURNING OFFICER</b>	
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>SETH ALKER, HEAD OF ELECTORAL SERVICES</b>	
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	<b>CLLR SEAN FITZSIMONS CHAIR OF GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>AUTHORITY TO TAKE DECISION:</b>	<p>Part 3 of the Constitution provides, in respect of General Purposes Committee functions that it is authorised to act in relation to:</p> <p>“Any matter not reserved to the Council or delegated to another Committee and related to a non-executive function.”</p> <p>The report is for noting.</p>	
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Electoral Services are a non-executive function.</b>
<b>CONTAINS EXEMPT INFORMATION?</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Public</b>
<b>WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>	

### 1 SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report to the General Purposes Committee presents the Returning Officer’s Review and report on the administration of the General Election on 4 July 2024 and seeks the Committee’s feedback.
- 1.2 Whilst the delivery of elections is the personal legal responsibility of the Returning Officer, this report is provided to give assurance to Members that the Returning Officer implemented the recommendations made in the independent review into the 2022 Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections.
- 1.3 This report is also provided to give assurance to Members that the Returning Officer is committed to continual review of the administration of elections in order to identify and implement good practice and continuous improvement to the delivery of elections in Croydon.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The General Purposes Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1** Note the Returning Officer's Review Report of the General Election on 4<sup>th</sup> July attached as Appendix 1.

## **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1** The Council has a legitimate interest to ensure its elections are organised as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 3.2** The Returning Officer wishes to provide assurance that the recommendations made in the independent review have been implemented and there is a commitment to continual improvement.
- 3.3** Whilst the Committee has an important role in the oversight of elections, and feedback from it is welcomed, decisions on the administration of elections is the personal responsibility of the Returning Officer

## **4 BACKGROUND**

- 4.1** An independent review was commissioned following the Croydon Council elections on 5 May 2022. The review report concluded that the outcome of the verification and count of the votes cast for the 2022 borough wards and Executive Mayor was transparent, safe and secure. However, there are lessons to be learned with regard to the resource arrangements and the effectiveness of the processes and policies in place.
- 4.2** The review report and an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report were presented to General Purposes Committee on 9 October 2023.
- 4.3** The GLA elections on 2 May 2024 and the General Election on 4 July 2024 were the first borough-wide elections at which the recommendations could be implemented.
- 4.4** Following these elections, the Returning Officer reviewed the administration of the General Election on 4 July 2024 in Croydon, reporting to CMT on the implementation of the recommendations and identifying a number of lessons learnt and actions to be taken in advance of the Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council elections in May 2026.

## **5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1** None. The Returning Officer is committed to the continual review and improvement of how elections are delivered in Croydon.

## **6 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 6.1** Implementation of the review recommendations will support the council priority to 'Ensure good governance is embedded and adopt best practice' (Outcome 1, priority 4 of the Mayor's Business Plan).

## **7 IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1.1 Local elections take place at least every 4 years. The next local election for all 70 members of the Council and the Executive Mayor will be held in May 2026 and the cost of the election needs to be funded by the Council. There will be a budget for this.
- 7.1.2 The funding source for UK Parliamentary elections is the UK Government-held Consolidated Fund.
- 7.1.3 The funding source for Greater London Authority elections is the Greater London Authority.
- 7.1.4 Any cost implications arising from recruitment to the core Elections Team will be considered under the usual governance arrangements.
- 7.1.5 There is no new activity or processes resulting from the Returning Officer's review of the election that will have financial implications, and there are no financial implications contained in this report.

Comments approved by: James Huggett, Head of Strategic Finance for Resources, Assistant Chief Executive and MTFS 30/10/24 on behalf of Allister Bannin, Director of Finance (Deputy s151 Officer).

### **7.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, the Review serves to inform the Committee on how the Acting Returning Officer has discharged her obligation in respect of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July General Election and ensure effective arrangements are in place for the administration of future elections.

Comments approved by: Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense, Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer 30/10/24

### **7.3 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.3.1 As a public body, the Council is required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty [PSED], as set out in the Equality Act 2010. The PSED requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the Council being exposed to costly, time consuming and reputation-damaging legal challenges.

Comments approved by: Ken Orlukwu, Senior Equalities Officer, on behalf of Helen Reeves, Head of Strategy & Policy on 30/10/2024.

### **7.4 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.4.1 There are actions in the Returning Officer's review of the election relating to the organisational structure of the core Elections team, and the training of staff. The Council will follow the appropriate HR policies and procedures in relation to these recommendations.
- 7.4.2 Other than those identified in 7.4.1 above, there are no other human resources implications arising directly from this report.

Comments approved by: Gillian Bevan, Head of HR Business Partnering on behalf of the Chief People Officer. 30/10/2024

### **7.5 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.5.1 There is no new activity or processes resulting from the Returning Officer's review of the election that would have data protection implications, and there are no data protection implications contained in this report.

Comments approved by: Francis Evans Hannay, Data Protection Officer 30/20/2024

### **7.6 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

- 7.6.1 Yes

### **7.7 APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 - Returning Officer's review of the General Election 4 July 2024