

The Final Report of the Election Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel

B

OSC/97

Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Monday 15 June 2009

General Purposes Committee
Monday 29 June 2008

By: Councillor Lee Burke, *the Chair of the Election Processes
2008 Scrutiny Panel*

Contact Officer: Chris Pedlow, *Democratic Services Officer –
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Key points:

- This report details the investigations and findings of the Election Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel.
- The Panel formulated 22 recommendations.
- The report also includes the response to the recommendations by the Council's Returning Officer – Lee Harris (Chief Executive)

Section 1 – Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Commission, at its meeting on Monday 7 July 2008, agreed to establish the Electoral Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel (EP2008SP) to undertake a review of the processes used for an election. The Commission's rationale for establishing the Panel was based on the recommendation made by the previous Election Processes Scrutiny Panel held in 2006, which recommended that:

'The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (or future equivalent) set up a Panel (or future equivalent) to reconsider the Council's election processes, approximately one year before the expected date of the next Parliamentary election.'

- 1.2 The timescale for the Panel was set as September 2008 to April 2009, to allow any recommendations, following assent by the Chief Executive as the Council's Returning Officer, to be put in place, where appropriate, for the European Parliament and County Council Elections on Thursday 4th June 2009.
- 1.3 The Panel on developing the review's scope chose to treat this investigation, in effect, as a continuation of the Election Processes Scrutiny Panel (EPSP) and use the parameters set within the EPSP scope with the proviso that the review could examine any further issues that directly relates to the electoral processes, if the whole Panel supports the concept.
- 1.4 Unusually, the responsibility for considering the Panel's recommendations was not with a committee, due to the nature of electoral processes; it was the Council's Returning Officer – Lee Harris's (Chief Executive) responsibility. As a result of this factor and the need to implement a number of the proposal prior to the 4th June 2009 elections, the Returning Officer has responded to the Panel's recommendations in Section 6 of this report.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Commission is asked to consider the report and endorse or amend the recommendations as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Returning Officer be requested to consider and approve, the report and its recommendations.

(Section 6 provides the Returning Officer's response on the report and his proposals)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Purpose Committee is asked to note and endorse the report and the response by the Returning Officer to the Panel's recommendations.

Section 2 – Examining the Recommendations from the Election Processes Scrutiny (2006)

- 2.1 The first aspect that the Electoral Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel decided to investigate were the recommendations formulated by the original 2006 Election Processes Scrutiny Panel. Members felt that it was important to review how those had been implemented and whether any amendments or further recommendations were required, before deciding upon any further aspects that may need investigating. The EPSP's recommendations are attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 2.2 The Panel chose not to examine recommendations 1a, 1b, 2 and 3, as they either related to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and Executive (now called Cabinet) passing comment, in 2006, on the EPSP's final report, or on an update in June, after the 2006 Election. Also with regard to recommendation 3, this was the proposal requesting the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to establish a further Scrutiny Panel, namely the Electoral Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel.
- 2.3 The Panel decided it would use their own experience of the elections since 2006 as a gauge to judge how successful the EPSP recommendations had been, the Panel.
- 2.4 The Panel felt that the majority of the twenty two recommendations made by the EPSP had been achieved, successfully implemented in some form, and had been used for the elections held, since and including, 2006.
- 2.5 It was felt that EPSP's recommendations, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20 and 21 had been successfully applied and should be continued as part of standard electoral processes used in Crawley.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Returning Officer be asked to ensure that recommendations 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20 and 21, devised by the Election Process Scrutiny Panel (2006), be continued as part of the Council's electoral process as they had proven to be successful and beneficial.

- 2.6 On the EPSP's fourth recommendation, the Panel felt that it was still important and prevalent that additional Count Assistants be used for General Elections. The Panel were of the view that it was important to achieve a fast, yet accurate count, especially with the national interest that surrounds General Election counts. Therefore by increasing the number of Count Assistants used, above that used at other Election Counts, this could be achieved.
- 2.7 However the Panel agreed that it should be left to the Returning Officer to decide upon the exact number of Counting Staff that he would require for a General Election Count.
- 2.8 The Panel commented that the EPSP's sixteenth recommendation could be explored further to aid recruiting the additional Count Assistants, as well as any other election staff that may be required.

- 2.9 In relation to EPSP's recommendation 16, the Panel was informed that discussions had taken place between Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council about the possible use of West Sussex County Council staff, based in Crawley, to help with Elections. However, currently those discussions had not proven to be very successful in enlisting further Election staff.

RECOMMENDATION 5

The Returning Officer be asked to ensure when arranging the number of Counting Assistants for a Parliamentary Election, that an additional number of Assistants be used, compared to that used at other Counts, even if this may require supplementary funds beyond that funded by the Election Claims Unit.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Returning Officer is asked to make further contact with West Sussex County Council concerning allowing West Sussex County Council employees to be used on Polling Stations or at the Count.

- 2.10 In relation to EPSP's recommendation 6, although the Panel acknowledged that Candidates and Agents had received the Electoral Commission's Guidance for Candidates and Agents they still considered that a Crawley Borough Council specific guide was required.
- 2.11 This guide should contain the exact details of how elections are run within Crawley and should include, who the Returning Officer and their Elections Team are, how the Count is run and a list of Polling Station addresses.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Returning Officer be asked to provide in advance to Candidates and Agents, the Electoral Commission's Guidance for Candidates and Agents (*or future equivalent*) along with a Crawley specific guide on how the Council runs its Elections.

- 2.12 The Panel deemed that recommendation 7, regarding the Returning Officer being asked to make announcements at the Count on how it was proceeding, had occurred during the last few elections and had proven useful. The Panel commented that with a new Returning Officer in place, this recommendation should be emphasised and repeated.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Returning Officer be asked to ensure that announcements are made during the Count on how it is proceeding.

- 2.13 The Panel's considered that recommendation 8 had worked in part by helping to move some of the political activists away from the counting tables but were concerned that this was only partly happening. There were also a number of other concerns raised by the Panel with regard to the layout of the Count and how it could be improved. The Panel therefore deemed it important to investigate fully, within their review, the larger issue of the how the Count tables were laid out.

- 2.14 Within that examination, they also felt that further work was needed on the catering for the Count. Although the Panel acknowledged that the availability of food had improved, as a result of the original recommendation 9, they considered further improvements were necessary.
- 2.15 This aspect of the Panel's investigation can be found in Section 5 of the report.
- 2.16 Following the success of EPSP's thirteenth recommendation, the Panel felt that all Party Activists, including Candidates and Agents, who were invited to attend the Count, should be issued with a badge for identification. These would be collected at the entrance to the Count where Activists must sign in and provide their invitation. The badges would be used purely for identification purposes and not for security reasons.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The Returning Officer be asked to ensure that all Party Activists, including Candidates and Agents attending the Count, should be issued with and wear a badge for identification and capacity purposes.

- 2.17 In relation to recommendations, 14 and 15, which dealt with Polling Station signage, the Panel requested that this issue be investigated further. It was acknowledged that the number of signs used had certainly increased. However, the clarity, positioning and, particularly, the quality of the signs were still considered to be poor.
- 2.18 This investigation can be found in Section 3 of the report, along with the issue of the use of schools as Polling Stations, a further area that the Panel asked to be investigated.
- 2.19 The Panel recognised that revamping the training programme for Polling Station staff, (recommendation 17), seemed to have improved the professionalism and the smoothness of how each Polling Station was run. However the Panel did highlight that there was an inconsistency between Polling Station to Polling Station on how the electoral register was being marked. Some staff crossed out the name and/ or the address, others put a line through the whole and others marked a 'X' by the side of the name.
- 2.20 The Electoral Services Manager had informed the Panel that at the Presiding Officers' training, staff had been informed how the register should be marked. The Panel questioned whether this information was being passed on to the Poll Clerks from the Presiding Officers.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The Returning Officer be asked to ensure that included within Presiding Officers' training, it be reemphasised how the electoral register should be marked, and that Presiding Officers' be reminded that it was their responsibility to ensure that their Poll Clerks were marking the register correctly.

- 2.21 On the issue of training, the Panel felt that EPSP's recommendation 18, the involvement of a Party Agent in the Electoral staffs training, would be beneficial and should be reconsidered.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Returning Officer be asked to invite an Agent to contribute to Presiding Officers training.

- 2.22 In reference to EPSP's recommendation 22, the Panel confirmed that a postal vote protocol had been produced and provided to Councillors, Candidates and Agents, which had been useful and should be continued. The Panel noted that the Electoral Commission had produced a similar protocol on a credit card size slip, and this might be more practical and valuable.

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Returning Officer be asked that the postal vote protocol that had been provided to Councillors, Candidates and Agents be continued and that the possibility of the protocol being produced on a similar scale to a credit card be examined.

Section 3 – Polling Stations – Signage.

- 3.1 Following the Panel's examination of the Election Process Scrutiny Panels recommendations, it was identified that recommendation 14 and recommendation 15 *'the Returning Officer be asked to provide Polling Stations with signs according to their individual needs, in consultation with local Members and experienced Presiding Officers'* and *'the Returning Officer be asked to increase the size of signs listing road names and encourage presiding officers to display them prominently'* required further investigation.
- 3.2 To aid their investigation on Polling Station signage, the Panel received a presentation which included multiple photographs of the exteriors of buildings used to house Polling Stations. The presentation included a Presiding Officer detailing, where and why, he would place the standard set of 3ft by 4ft large plastic Polling Station signs outside and within the building.
- 3.3 The Panel, rather than viewing all twenty two buildings photos, chose to only view the presentations in respect of the Langley Green Community Centre, Broadfield Community Centre, St. Mary's Church (Southgate), West Green Primary School, the Montefiore Institute (Three Bridges), and Furnace Green Community Centre. That was because each building had specific difficulties/ issues relating to them, with the exception of the Furnace Green Community Centre, as this was seen as an example of an 'a typical' Community Centre that is used as a Polling Station.
- 3.4 The Panel commented that, based on the Furnace Green Community Centre, there were certainly enough locations surrounding Community Centres to affix Polling Station signs, e.g. walls, railings, in windows, bike racks or even on trees. However it was felt that increasing the number of hard plastic Polling Stations signs would be of benefit.
- 3.5 The Electoral Services Manager informed the Panel that within his current budget, there was enough money to fund two new 3ft by 4ft plastic Polling Station signs, (*as shown below left*), per building. There was also the possibility of purchasing, within the budget, two metal standalone 'A-Frame' Polling Station signs, (*as shown below right*).



RECOMMENDATION 13

That the Electoral Services Manager be asked to purchase an additional two 3ft by 4ft plastic signs per Polling Station building.

- 3.6 The Panel requested to view photographs of Langley Green Community Centre as the building was accessible from all four sides, and therefore the position of the signs was important for helping to direct voters to the entrance. There was also an issue of slight congestion within the entrance hall where voters seemed to congregate as they tried to find which of the three Polling Stations, (split over two rooms), they required.
- 3.7 From viewing the presentation, the Panel commented that, similar to Furnace Green Community Centre, there were many potential locations where Polling Station signs could be positioned. The proposed additional two signs would certainly be beneficial in helping to cover all sides of the building. The Panel felt that the Langley Green Community Centre would be a suitable building to trial one of the 'A-Frames.' It was suggested that the 'A-Frame' could be positioned on the pavement running in parallel to Stagelands, with the sign facing towards the parade, thus encouraging those using the shops to visit the Polling Station.
- 3.8 The Panel chose to look at the Broadfield Community Centre, as it is the building that holds the most number of Polling Stations, four, and covered two Borough wards; Broadfield North and South respectively. To enable this number of Polling Stations to be housed, these were split across three rooms within the Community Centre.
- 3.9 The Panel felt that there was a need for a clearer method for voters to identify which room they needed to go to, in order to find their Polling Station. The Panel felt it may be possible in addition to the list of street names and relevant rooms that was already displayed in the foyer, to print on the poll cards either room 'A' and room 'B'. This would help voters identify which room they needed to go to at the Community Centre, each room would then be labelled clearly either 'A' or 'B'.
- 3.10 The Panel also felt this concept may also benefit the voters using Langley Green Community Centre.

RECOMMENDATION 14(a)

That the Electoral Services Manager be asked to ensure that the Polling Cards, for the voters using the Polling Stations held at both Langley Green Community Centre and at Broadfield Community Centre, be printed to clearly identify, with a letter, which room they need to use.

RECOMMENDATION 14(b)

That the Electoral Services Manager be asked to ensure that each of the rooms at both Langley Green Community Centre and at Broadfield Community Centre be clearly identified with a letter, which matched those printed on the Polling Cards.

- 3.11 Surrounding the Broadfield Community Centre, the Panel felt that there were plenty of places where Polling Stations signs could be displayed. However it was accepted that due to the location of the Community Centre entrance, off set below the Broadfield Barton itself, there was a need for more signs showing where the Polling Stations were and how to get to the Community Centre. Therefore the Panel felt that Broadfield Community Centre was another opportunity to trial the use of the metal 'A-Frame' Polling Station sign, as it provided a good method of informing those members of the public using the Barton, the location of their Polling Station.

RECOMMENDATION 15

That the Electoral Services Manager be asked to purchase two metal 'A-Frames' 3ft by 4ft Polling Station signs and that these signs be trialled at Langley Green Community Centre, and at Broadfield Community Centre respectively.

- 3.12 With regard to St. Mary's Church, Southgate, the Panel felt that there were clearly a number of suitable places for securing standard Polling Station signs. The Panel also considered whether the side entrance to the Church would be more appropriate as the entrance/ exit to the Polling Stations. However on viewing photographs of the side entrance it clearly showed a large sloping step/ lip which would not be accessible for many voters, compared to the currently used main entrance. Thus the Panel felt that the main entrance remained the best option.
- 3.13 Prior to examining the West Green Primary School presentation, it was acknowledged that there was a lack of potential alternative locations to hold Polling Stations, within West Green, apart from the school. The school itself did have a number of railings where signs could be placed.
- 3.14 Councillor Hull, supported by the Panel, raised concerns about the considerable distance between the car park and the entrance to the school building, especially for elderly and disabled voters. It was therefore proposed that the School's rear entrance, just off Town Barn Road, be opened during Elections, to allow cars to drop off elderly/ disabled persons, to the Polling Stations.

RECOMMENDATION 16

That the Electoral Services Manager ensures that the 'rear' entrance to West Green Primary school, (off Town Barn Road) be open to allow cars to drop off elderly/ disabled persons, to the Polling Stations.

- 3.15 The Panel chose to examine the Montefiore Institute as they had a number of queries and concerns over its use including the disabled access, the possible use of a smaller side room as the main entrance to provide some shelter for 'Tellers,' and the car parking facility.
- 3.16 From examining the presentation the Panel agreed that access to the small side room was not sufficiently safe to be used as the main entrance to the Polling Stations. With regard to the access for disabled persons, the Panel noted that the Council's Disabled Access Officer had considered it to be a suitable facility, as the access for disabled persons was at the side of the building (Hazelwick Avenue).
- 3.17 The Panel acknowledged that the Montefiore Institute does have a good sized car park at the rear of the building; however it was not very obvious to those who did not know the building, even with signs showing the access.

- 3.18 The Panel concluded that it was currently fine to use the Montefiore Institute to house Polling Stations but asked that the Returning Officer, during the next statutory review into the Council's Polling Stations, examine whether there are any more suitable locations within the vicinity of the Montefiore Institute that could be used to hold some Polling Stations. This should include the Boxing Club on Three Bridges Road and the Free Church on the corner of Haslett Avenue and Three Bridges Road.

RECOMMENDATION 17

That the Returning Officer be asked to include within the next statutory review into the Council's Polling Stations (in 2011 approximately) an examination into whether there are any more suitable locations (such as the Boxing Club on Three Bridges Road and the Free Church on the corner of Haslett Avenue and Three Bridges Road) to hold the Polling Stations that are currently held in the Montefiore Institute.

Section 4 – Polling Stations – the Use of Schools.

- 4.1 A number of Panel Members raised concern over the number of Polling Stations being housed within schools, following concerns received from their Constituents. The Panel felt that this was an issue that should be investigated further, as part of the review.
- 4.2 The Panel were informed that schools were the only buildings in statute that the Returning Officer had the legal right to use as a Polling Station if so required.
- 4.3 The schools / educational facilities that were used to hold Polling Stations (Polling District) for the Local Elections in 2008 were:
- Milton Mount Primary School in Pound Hill North (LJA),
 - West Green Primary School in West Green (LO),
 - The Brook School in Maidenbower (LHB),
 - Pupil Referral Unit in Pound Hill South and Worth (LKB),
 - Northgate Primary School in Northgate (LI), and
 - The Mill Primary School in Ifield (LFB).
- 4.4 The Panel noted that the Pupil Referral Unit would not be used as a Polling Station for the European and County Elections 2009, as exams are being held on the same day. Instead the Polling Station would be in St. Edmunds Church, which is just outside of the polling district the Polling Station would be covering.
- 4.5 In addition, Bewbush Primary School would be holding the Bewbush Polling Stations for the European and County Elections 2009. This was only a temporary measure whilst the Bewbush Regeneration Project was occurring. It was expected that once the regeneration had been completed the Polling Stations would revert to the newly rebuilt Bewbush Community Centre.

- 4.6 The Panel examined the report *the Polling Districts and their Polling Places* considered by the General Purposes Committee on 1 October 2007 and subsequently ratified by Council on 31 October 2007. This report produced by the Electoral Services Manager identified the buildings which were proposed to house the Polling Stations for all elections held within the Borough. It was noted that the issue of the use of schools as Polling Stations was not identified within in the report.
- 4.7 The Panel commented that as the location of Polling Stations had been examined recently, they would not re-examine this again. However it was acknowledged by the Panel, that the use of schools as Polling Stations should be investigated further.
- 4.8 Councillor Keith Brockwell requested that the Panel investigate, on an individual basis, the use of Milton Mount Community Centre rather than the Milton Mount Primary School, for one of the Pound Hill North Polling Stations, as he felt that the Community Centre was a logical alternative to the School.
- 4.9 The Panel agreed to this and asked that the Electoral Services Manager examine the potential use of Milton Mount Community Centre as a Polling Station.
- 4.10 The Electoral Services Manager, following further investigation, provided the Panel with his provisional opinion that the location of the Milton Mount Community Centre was not as central within the Ward as the Milton Mount Primary School, and had weak transport links. Its location was not accessible or user friendly for vote's, as it was much more difficult to park at the Community Centre compared to the School, with its car park and the neighbouring Grattons Drive shops' car park.
- 4.11 The Panel decided that they would support the Electoral Services Manager's professional view on the location of the Pound Hill North Polling Station within Milton Mount School as his rationale was considered to be in the best interest of the voters.

RECOMMENDATION 18

That the Returning Officer be asked to include within the next statutory review into the Council's Polling Stations (in 2011 approximately) that the rationale for the use of schools as Polling Stations and possible alternative venues be investigated.

Section 5 – The Election Count at K2 – Crawley.

- 5.1 To examine the issues relating to the Count, the Panel chose to hold one of its meetings at K2-Crawley. That meeting encompassed a guided tour of K2's Main Sport Hall and its facilities used for Election Counts by K2's Front of House Manager (Gloria Newstead), the Returning Officer and the Electoral Services Manager, followed by a standard Panel discussion.
- 5.2 Following the tour of the Main Sports Hall, and an examination of photos of the layout of previous Counts, as well as Members experience, the Panel felt that there was not enough space to pass behind the Counting Agents position by the fixed wall bleachers (staged seating). The Panel noted that the bleachers could be stored flat into the wall, if they were not required. However for larger events that

may be held directly after the Count the bleacher may have to be in place prior to the Count. The Panel felt that when possible the bleachers should not be out during any Election Count.

RECOMMENDATION 19

That the Electoral Services Manager is asked to ensure when possible, that the main fixed bleachers in the K2 Sport Hall are not opened during any Election Count.

- 5.3 The Panel considered that at recent Counts there had been congestion behind the Count Agents, because many people were standing viewing the events happening at each table, and therefore there was not enough room to walk past. It was acknowledged that this was especially true, where two tables were adjacent to a corner.
- 5.4 Concerns were also raised that the signs which identified the Wards being counted at each Count table, seemed to particularly block some views of the Count. Thus it was felt that the signs should be attached to the Count Supervisors table.

RECOMMENDATION 20

When planning the layout for the Count, the Electoral Services Manager be asked to:-

- (i) consider how best to ensure there is an adequate and comfortable circulation space for candidates and agents around each table, particularly at those tables adjacent to a corner; and**
 - (ii) ensure that the signposts for each table are placed next to the Supervisors' tables, and not next to the counting tables.**
- 5.5 The Panel commented that at previous Counts, the chairs assigned for Counting Agents, that were positioned in parallel to the Counting tables, seemed to disappear or be moved during the duration of the Count. The Panel felt that some form of notice was required on those chairs to ensure that they were not moved.

RECOMMENDATION 21

That the Electoral Services Manager is asked to ensure that on the row of chairs set out for Counting Agents, opposite the Count tables, that they have reserve signs on them stating '*For Candidates and Counting Agents Only. Do not Remove*'.

- 5.6 Following concerns raised by a Candidate after last years Count, the Panel considered that it was needed to be acknowledged that during the Count, Candidates and their Agents might wish to speak to the Returning Officer, about any issues on events taking place.

RECOMMENDATION 22

The Returning Officer is asked to ensure that there is a clearly identifiable method in place for Candidates and Agents to attract his attention if they have a query or an issue, during the Count.

- 5.7 On the issue of catering at Election Counts, which had been raised as Recommendation 9 by the previous review. The Panel acknowledged that since last years Election there had been a change in the company running K2-Crawley and also a new catering contractor. The Panel, following assurances by K2's Front of House Manager, accepted that the new caterers OJ's would have the ability to provide food and drinks for the Count, even if went on for a long period and further refreshments were needed.
- 5.8 The Panel also recognised that OJ's café would be open, for normal business during daytime Counts. It was noted that during all Election Counts the televisions located by the bar on the mezzanine, would provide coverage of the National results as they happened.
- 5.9 The Panel therefore felt that there was no need for a further recommendation with regard to catering provided during the Elections Count as the facilities now seem to be in place.

Section 6 – The Returning Officer Responds

This section has been written by Lee Harris.

- 6.1 With this being my first Election at Crawley as Returning Officer, I have found the Scrutiny Review to be beneficial as it has provided me with a helpful guide and insight as to how elections are organised within Crawley. It has also highlighted to me the areas that have been working well and those aspects that might need improving. With that in mind, my approach to the Electoral Process, certainly for the forthcoming West Sussex County Council Elections and the European Parliamentary Elections, will be to see how the well established processes work in practice, then reflect upon and consider whether any further changes are required. I don't intend to rush in and make changes for the sake of it.
- 6.2 Having viewed the Panel's recommendations and also had the opportunity to discuss the issues with the Members at their meeting in April 2009, I feel that the Panel's proposals for the most part are logical and well evidenced. Therefore, I am happy to support most of them and to ensure that they are implemented. Instead of commenting upon all of the recommendations individually, I have referred to a number of specific ones below.
- 6.3 I am supportive of recommendation 4 proposal, as if the previous Panel's recommendations have proven to have been successful, then they should be continued. I am able to confirm that a guide has been produced and circulated accordingly, in relation to the Panel's Recommendation 7.
- 6.4 Recommendation 8 requests that I make update announcements during the Count on how it is proceeding. I am happy to do this, as I feel that it is important to ensure that those present know about progress of the individual counts. In relation to recommendations 17 and 18, which relate to specific aspects to be investigated as part of the next statutory review into Polling Stations, I acknowledge the request for further consideration on the continued use of schools and the Montefiore Institute, and I confirm that these will be examined accordingly.

- 6.5 The only recommendation that I had some reservation about was recommendation 5, as I am unclear as to the Panel's purpose. Was the request for additional staff to facilitate a quick count, an accurate count, or for both. Having had a discussion on this with the Panel at their meeting in April, I now understand the reasoning behind this recommendation, which related to the length of last Parliamentary Election Count in 2005. In response I will confirm that once the next Parliamentary Election is called, I will with the Electoral Services Manager, take due consideration as to the number of Count Assistants required to ensure that the Count runs as smoothly as possible. I am not able to confirm at this time whether that means additional Count Assistants.
- 6.6 In response to Recommendation 22, rather than have a specific signalling method, I will ensure that myself and the Deputy Returning Officers are continually circling the hall during the Count, and we will all be ready to deal with any issues as they arise.
- 6.7 Finally, I would like to thank the Panel for their work and valuable recommendations, on behalf of the Electoral Services Team and myself.

Section 7 – Financial Information

- 7.1 Of the recommendations contained within this report, only one could not be achieved through current existing budgets, that being Recommendation 5.
- 7.2 If the Returning Officer and his Election Team wish to fund, as highlighted in Recommendation 5, additional Counting Assistants, above that funded by the Election Claims Unit, they would have to seek additional funding through the Budget Advisory Group process.

Section 8 – Panel: Membership and Attendance

- 8.1 The Electoral Turnout 2008 Scrutiny Panel comprised of Councillors L A M Burke (Chair), K Brockwell, B J Burgess, L R Gilroy, R J Hull, G K Seekings and B A Smith.
- 8.2 The meetings of, and attendance at, the Panel, were as follows:
- Thursday 25 September 2008** – Attended by Councillors L A M Burke (Chair), K Brockwell, B J Burgess, R J Hull, G K Seekings and B A Smith.
- Tuesday 16 December 2008** – Attended by Councillors L A M Burke (Chair), L R Gilroy, R J Hull and G K Seekings.
- Tuesday 21 April 2009** – Attended by Councillors L A M Burke (Chair), K Brockwell, L R Gilroy, R J Hull, and B A Smith.

- 8.3 The Panel would like to thank Andrew Oakley – (Electoral Services Manager), and Chris Pedlow – (Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny), for the support they provided during the review. Also the Panel would like to thank Lee Harris (Returning Officer) for his involvement and contribution, along with Gloria Newstead (Front of House Manager – K2 Crawley) for ensuring that the facilities were available at K2 for meeting of the Panel.

Section 9 – Background papers and Other Useful information

- 9.1 The Final Report of the Election Processes Scrutiny Panel –
(OSC - February 6 2006)
Notes from the Electoral Processes 2008 Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 25
September 2008, Tuesday 16 December 2008 and Tuesday 21 April 2009

ENDS

Recommendations made by the Election Processes Scrutiny Panel (2006)

RECOMMENDATION 1a – The Scrutiny Commission is asked to recommend Council approves the report, subject to any changes Members wish to make.

RECOMMENDATION 1b – the Executive is asked to comment on the report

RECOMMENDATION 2 – The Overview and Scrutiny Commission receives a report at its meeting in June 2006 on the implementation of the panel's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – The Overview and Scrutiny Commission (or future equivalent) set up a panel (or future equivalent) to reconsider the Council's election processes, approximately one year before the expected date of the

RECOMMENDATION 4 – The Returning Officer be asked to support the principle of increasing the number of Counting Assistants at Parliamentary elections beyond that funded by the Election Claims Unit. The specific number to be agreed when the Panel reconvenes

RECOMMENDATION 5 – The Returning Officer be asked to provide clear guidance to Candidates, Agents and Counting Agents on the role of Count Staff and vice versa.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – The Returning Officer be asked to provide detailed information about the workings of the count in advance to Candidates and Counting Agents.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – The Returning Officer be asked to make more announcements at the count on how it is proceeding.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – The Returning Officer be asked to move chairs for political activists well away from counting tables.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – The Returning Officer be asked to provide written specification for the K2 catering team before elections to guarantee the provisions the Council wants, including a reminder this was an opportunity for the café to make money.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – The Returning Officer be asked to cease ballot paper account checks at the count, but instruct Presiding Officers on double and triple stations to check each others' ballot paper accounts.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – The Returning Officer be asked to encourage all Presiding Officers to be helpful to Tellers.

RECOMMENDATION 12 – The Returning Officer be asked to provide a poster on tellers based on the guidance for tellers section in the Electoral Commission's Guide for Candidates and Agents to be used at all Polling Stations.

RECOMMENDATION 13 – The Returning Officer be asked to ensure all Presiding Officers have and wear badges stating their full name and position and Poll Clerks have and wear badges stating their position.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – The Returning Officer be asked to provide Polling Stations with signs according to their individual needs, in consultation with local Members and experienced Presiding Officers.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – The Returning Officer be asked to increase the size of signs listing road names and encourage presiding officers to display them prominently

RECOMMENDATION 16 –The Returning Officer be asked to contact West Sussex County Council Staff working in Crawley for use of Polling Stations or at the count.

RECOMMENDATION 17 –The Returning Officer be asked to revamp the training programme for Polling Station staff.

RECOMMENDATION 18 – The Returning Officer be asked to consider whether and how Agents could contribute to Staff training.

RECOMMENDATION 19 – The Returning Officer be asked to arrange for the Council's contact centre to deal with simple calls during election periods.

RECOMMENDATION 20 – The Returning Officer be asked to update the details on poll cards when the names of schools or other polling buildings change and where appropriate, provide more specific maps.

RECOMMENDATION 21 – The Returning Officer be asked to remember to inform Agents of late changes, such as errors on poll cards.

RECOMMENDATION 22 – The Returning Officer be asked to write a postal vote protocol for Councillors, Candidates and Agents.