



Best Value Service Review

Elections (January 2001)



CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	1
The Scope and Purpose of the Review	1
The Elections Team in Context	1
Evaluating the Review	2
The Current Legislative Framework and Future Developments	3
The Service Review	4
Outcomes of the Review	4 - 9
SWOT Analysis	4
Possible Service Improvements/Efficiency Savings	5
Summary of Costs of On-going Service Improvements/Efficiency Savings	9
The Service Continuous Improvements Programme	9
Conclusions	9
 Appendices	
1	The Review Methodology
2	Example of a District Council Election Timetable
3	Results of the Consultation and Benchmarking Exercises and Other Research
4	Service Delivery Issues
5	Glossary of terms
6	The Electoral Pilots
7	Work Programme 2001 - 2006

BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW

ELECTIONS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Best Value legislation requires the fundamental review of each of the Council's Services once every five years. It is a process which challenges why and how services are provided and should result in continuous improvements in terms of cost, quality and satisfaction.

2 THE SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1 The District and Parish Elections held in May 1999 cost £91,626 (gross) with turnout results of 39.29% and 44.78% respectively. These elections involved the hiring 113 polling stations, 8 count centres and the appointment of 249 polling staff and 196 count staff.

- 2.2 The purpose of the Review was to assess the work of the Elections Team in respect of the administration of elections against the 4 C's of Best Value and to establish an improvement programme to assist the Team meet its prime objective:-

"To ensure that turnout at elections is increased through improving ease of access to voting and to those persons wishing to stand as candidates."

- 2.3 The review was conducted in accordance with the methodology set out in Appendix 1

3 THE ELECTIONS TEAM IN CONTEXT

- 3.1 At present the Team administers the following elections:-

Election	Frequency
European Elections	Every 5 Years
Parliamentary Elections	Variable (must be within 5 years of previous Election)
County Council, District Council and Parish Council Elections	Every 4 years
Parish Polls	On demand
Referendums	On demand

- 3.2 In addition the Team will administer on average one County or District casual vacancy and 40 parish council casual vacancies per year. However the majority of parish council vacancies result in co-options rather than full elections.
- 3.3 The basic processes for conducting an election under the "old rules" are shown in the example of a timetable for a District Council election (attached as Appendix 2). It is hoped that this will also provide a flavour of the work undertaken by the Team.
- 3.4 Although the determination of applications for absent votes is a function of the Electoral Registration Officer it was considered appropriate to include it in this review as the Chief Executive holds both positions and it is in the elections field that its outcome is felt.

4 EVALUATING THE REVIEW

- 4.1 Legally the administration of elections is not a function of the local authority but of a named person - the Returning Officer.
- 4.2 The Review concentrated on the administration of District and Parish elections. This is due to the different persons undertaking these functions for the various types of elections as shown below:-

Parliamentary Elections	The Sheriff of the County is the Returning Officer. His functions are discharged locally by an Acting Returning Officer of the District Council
European Elections	The Secretary of State appoints a Returning Officer for each Electoral Region. Certain functions are conferred on "Acting Returning Officers for Parliamentary Elections." These persons are designated the Local Returning Officer
County Council Elections	The County Council must appoint one of its officers to be the Returning Officer for these Elections. It is usual for an officer of the District Council to be appointed as a Deputy County Returning Officer with full powers.
District and Parish Elections	The District Council must appoint an officer to be the Returning Officer for these local elections.

- 4.3 In addition District and Parish elections are funded either in whole or in part by this Authority. The costs of other elections are reimbursed either by the County Council or the Home Office.
- 4.4 This Council (as the Best Value Authority) has only certain functions in respect of elections, namely:-
- ◆ It must appoint an officer of the Council to be the Returning Officer at District and Parish elections.

- ◆ It must meet all expenditure properly incurred by the Returning Officer so long as it does not exceed any scale fixed by the Council
- ◆ It may divide any ward into polling districts and alter any polling district
- ◆ It may assign officials to assist the Returning Officer in carrying out any of his duties.
- ◆ For European elections it must place the services of its officers at the disposal of the Returning Officer to assist him in the discharge of his functions.

4.5 All other functions are the personal responsibility of the Returning Officer and he, and his staff, are liable personally for any breach of official duty.

4.6 It was considered beneficial to undertake a review of the elections function in accordance with the principles of Best Value. However, in view of the legal situation it is considered appropriate that the Review should be evaluated in the following manner:-

- ◆ The Best Value Advisory Panel should consider the review in the normal way and make recommendations. These will be seen as part of the consultation element .
- ◆ The Best Value Panel will be asked to note the report and to make recommendations to the Returning Officer and the P&R Committee as appropriate
- ◆ The Returning Officer will determine any issues arising from the Review in relation to his personal functions.

5 THE CURRENT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

5.1 The conduct of elections is highly regulated by statute. The principal acts, the Local Government Act 1972, and the Representation of the People Acts 1983 and 1985, are backed up by a host of Statutory Instruments, Home Office Guidance and case law.

5.2 Although most of this law is firmly based in the 19th Century, the Government has placed democratic renewal at the heart of its modernising agenda.

5.3 The Representation of the People Act 2000 (RPA 2000), the Local Government Act 2000 and the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 all impact on the work of the Elections Team. In summary this legislation includes:-

- ◆ The introduction of electoral pilots to increase turnout at local elections
- ◆ Postal voting on demand and overseas and changes to application deadlines
- ◆ The establishment of an Electoral Commission
- ◆ Changes to the registration of political parties and the nomination of candidates
- ◆ Changes to the rules on expenses incurred by candidates
- ◆ Legislation to facilitate referendums
- ◆ Changes to support the introduction of the new local government political management arrangements particularly in relation to the direct election of mayors.

5.4 As at the time of writing only the Electoral Pilots have been introduced and this issue has been examined as part of the Review (see Appendix 6).

6 THE SERVICE REVIEW

6.1 Details of the Review are set out in the following Appendices:-

- ◆ Appendix 3 - Results of the Consultation and Benchmarking exercises and other research
- ◆ Appendix 4 - Service Delivery Issues.

6.2 The outcomes of the Review are summarised in Part 7 using a SWOT analysis. A number of service developments are then proposed which will assist the Team address the weaknesses and threats identified and to enable the achievement of Best Value.

6.3 To assist in the consideration of the Review a glossary of terms is attached as Appendix 5.

7 OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

7.1 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ High levels of satisfaction in the work undertaken by the Team ◆ Turnout levels for Local Elections relatively high compared to the benchmarking group and nationally ◆ Training of polling staff considered useful and of good quality ◆ High percentage of postal voters within the electorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Difficulties in recruiting polling staff exacerbated by the low elector to polling station ratio. ◆ High transport and supplies and services costs ◆ Low candidate nominations arising from notices/newspaper advertisements ◆ Difficulties in providing polling stations due to availability of suitable venues and the attitude of schools ◆ The ability of the Team to influence electoral turnout within present rules.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Increasing electoral turnout through a pilot scheme. This may also reduce transport costs ◆ Legislative changes relating to absent voting should boost the proportion of postal voters in the electorate and thereby increase turnout ◆ The review of ward boundaries may mean that the number of polling stations may be reduced and thereby reduce staffing requirements ◆ Strengthening of the policy on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The costs and other resources needed to submit, operate and evaluate a pilot scheme. ◆ Resources needed to be diverted due to number of casual vacancies arising from Parish Councils ◆ An increase in the number of elections due to changes in political management arrangements and referendums eg on the European Single Currency ◆ The attitude of some service heads to

release of internal staff for polling duties.	releasing staff for polling duty ◆ A change of policy to require internal staff to take leave or flexi-leave when undertaking polling duties will have serious effects on staffing polling stations
---	--

7.2 Service Improvements/Efficiency Savings

7.2.1 Pilot Schemes

The RPA 2000 allows Returning Officers to seek changes to the local election rules to introduce measures to increase turnout.

A number of pilot schemes were tried out at the May 2000 Elections. An evaluation of the pilot schemes conducted on behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA) is set out in Appendix 6. This evaluation suggests that all postal ballots may have a positive effect on turnout. However these also resulted in a heavy net increase in expenditure.

The panellists of the People's Voice also considered that the postal voting could increase turnout (see Appendix 3B).

The results of the LGA evaluation are considered to be simplistic in terms of costs. The May 2000 Elections were concentrated in urban areas where there is likely to be a high ratio of electors to polling stations and because the pilots concentrated on wards rather than polling districts or parishes.

In predominantly rural areas, such as Salisbury District, there is a wide variation in the number of voters allocated to polling stations. This is to facilitate parish elections but also ensures that voters do not need to travel excessive distances. For example the lowest ratio of voters to polling stations is in Wilsford-cum-Lake where only 81 voters are allocated to a polling station.

A simple analysis of the costs of providing a polling station compared to all postal voting showed that there was a breakeven point at around 400 electors. Any polling district with fewer voters should produce a saving to the Council if all postal ballots were conducted.

If a pilot scheme was tried out on the basis of all postal ballots for those polling districts containing under 400 electors it should:-

- ◆ Lead to savings of approximately £5000;
- ◆ Increase turnout in those areas affected; and
- ◆ Assist in overcoming the difficulties experienced with recruiting polling staff.

The pilot would involve 9351 electors using postal voting (out of over 84,000) and a reduction in the use of 43 polling stations (out of 113)

It is therefore recommended that consideration should be given to applying for a pilot scheme based on all postal ballots (eg the removal of the opportunity to vote at a polling station) for selected polling districts for the 2003 District and Parish Elections.

7.2.2 **Increasing Postal Voting**

The RPA 2000 will allow postal voting on demand which should increase turnout. The deadline for receipt of applications will also be relaxed from 11 working days before the Election to 6 working days.

The Elections Team undertook an experiment to increase voter awareness and to boost postal voting prior to two by-elections in 1999. Flyers were circulated to each household providing details of the elections and including an absent vote application form. The outcome of the experiment was unclear although it was well received by political parties and the electorate. In addition the cost of introducing the initiative District-wide at approximately £8,500 was considered excessive.

With the relaxation of the application deadline it is now intended to circulate a combined poll card and postal vote application form. This was not considered appropriate previously because it was felt the issue of poll cards should be closer to the poll and this provided only a short period for applications for postal votes to be made.

Discussions with print companies suggest that the cost of providing combined poll cards and postal vote application forms should be negligible.

It is therefore proposed that combined poll card/postal vote application should be introduced for all elections at the earliest possible opportunity.

7.2.3 **Attracting Candidates/Candidate Information**

Evidence from the DETR suggests that the greater number of candidates per seat the higher the turnout. This is particularly relevant if independent candidates are contesting an election.

The low rate of contested parish council elections also shows the need for attracting more candidates (see Appendix 3C).

At present notices providing details of how to obtain nomination packs are posted across the District and are placed in the Salisbury Journal. In 1999 an advert was also placed in the Council's newspaper "The Citizen" to attract candidates.

However it is considered that further work is necessary to attract candidates.

It is proposed that a number of workshops should be held prior to the next District and Parish Elections, possibly in conjunction with the Wiltshire Association of Local Councils, to inform potential candidates of the electoral process and to provide an introduction to "life" as an elected member.

It is anticipated that the cost of this initiative will be negligible.

7.2.4 **Reviewing Polling Districts**

The introduction of the revised warding arrangements following the recent District-wide Boundary Review will require a review of polling districts in some areas.

It is proposed to extend this review across the District with a view to ensuring, as far as possible, the efficient distribution of electors to polling stations and thereby reduce costs.

7.2.5 **Transport, Supplies and Services Issues**

Transport, supplies and services issues are discussed in Appendix 4.

It is considered that savings of approximately £2000 can be made from these budget heads.

7.2.6 **Parish Recharges at Combined Elections**

The results of the benchmarking exercise suggests that there is no correlation between how parish council election costs are recharged at combined elections and the percentage of parish elections contested.

The Council's present policy is to recharge only directly attributable costs (eg the costs of printing ballot papers) and not joint costs (eg the hire of the polling station). The reasons for the introduction of this policy are not known.

Based on the combined 1999 District and Parish Elections, if the parishes had met half of the expenditure for hiring polling stations, transport and polling staff, then approximately £2200 additional income would have been generated for the District Council.

It is therefore proposed that the Council should review its present policy on recharging parish election costs at combined elections.

7.2.7 **Candidate Information**

Although satisfaction with the information provided to candidates was high it is proposed that further consultation be undertaken on whether the information can be reduced or whether it should be released periodically through the electoral process.

7.2.8 **Staffing Elections**

In view of the problems in recruiting and retaining staff for the 1999 Elections and in the interests of fairness and consistency it is proposed that the policy on releasing Council staff for polling duties should be strengthened so that service unit heads are required to release those staff wishing to participate unless in the opinion of the Chief Executive it will cause severe operational problems (see Appendix 4).

No additional costs should arise from this initiative.

7.2.9 **Environmental Stewardship and Social Inclusion**

At present the Council is developing strategies for environmental stewardship and social inclusion.

Service improvements will be developed when the Council's priorities in these areas are known.

In terms of social inclusion under the present election rules blind voters may be assisted to vote by a companion or by the presiding officer. Absent voting is also available for people who are unable to attend polling stations due to physical incapacity. However this is only available to persons receiving the higher rate of the mobility component of the disability living allowance or where the application is attested by a doctor, registered nurse, Christian Science practitioner, the person in charge of a residential care home or local authority residential accommodation, or the warden of a sheltered housing scheme.

Ramps and adapted polling screens are made available at certain polling stations where access problems have been notified by the venue or where difficulties have arisen in the past.

The RPA 2000 also includes provisions to assist voting as follows:-

- ◆ Postal voting on demand will remove the need for attestation or the receipt of disability living allowance (although the rules will still apply to applications to vote by proxy)
- ◆ A large version of the ballot paper must be displayed in all polling stations
- ◆ A device to assist blind or partially sighted voters to vote without assistance must be provided (details of the device are still awaited).
- ◆ The rules on the assistance which may be provided to blind voters are extended to cover people with disabilities and people unable to read.

In the interests of social inclusion and due to introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act it is considered that a review of access arrangements to polling stations should be undertaken in partnership with the voluntary sector.

This should enable an assessment to be made of any additional equipment required and/or better targeting of present equipment.

The cost of this initiative is unknown at present. However it is considered appropriate to earmark £1,000 for the survey.

In terms of environmental stewardship the proposed electoral pilot, postal voting on demand and changes to delivery mechanisms of polling booths should reduce the number of vehicle journeys at elections.

7.3 Summary of Costs of On-going Service Improvements/Efficiency Savings

The following table shows the effects of the service improvements and efficiency savings on the net costs of the function.

	£	£
Baseline Net Cost of Function (based on 1999 District & Parish Election Actuals)¹		84900
Additional expenditure for Service Developments:		
Access Survey	<u>1,000</u>	1,000
Anticipated efficiency savings:		
Electoral Pilot	5,000	
Transport, Supplies and Services	2,000	
Additional income from parish recharges	<u>2,200</u>	9,200
Revised Cost of Service		<u>76700</u>
Impact of Service Improvements & Efficiency Savings		£8200

8 THE SERVICE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

8.1 The Service Continuous Improvement Programme is based on the service improvements and efficiency savings set out in Section 7. These have been developed into a work programme for the next 5 years (attached as Appendix 7).

8.2 The production of performance indicators and targets is extremely difficult for this function due to the different rules which apply at various elections and because factors outside of the Returning Officer's control (eg the weather) impact on turnout. However it is hoped that through undertaking the work set out in the SCIP:-

- ◆ The turnout figures at local elections will be maintained above the national average at least and indeed improved into the upper quartile.
- ◆ The cost to the District Council of undertaking full local elections will be reduced by approximately 10%.
- ◆ Satisfaction with the service should be maintained. However the proposed electoral pilot may reduce satisfaction amongst voters slightly as some voters value casting their votes in person.

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 This Review represents an in-depth examination of the Elections function.

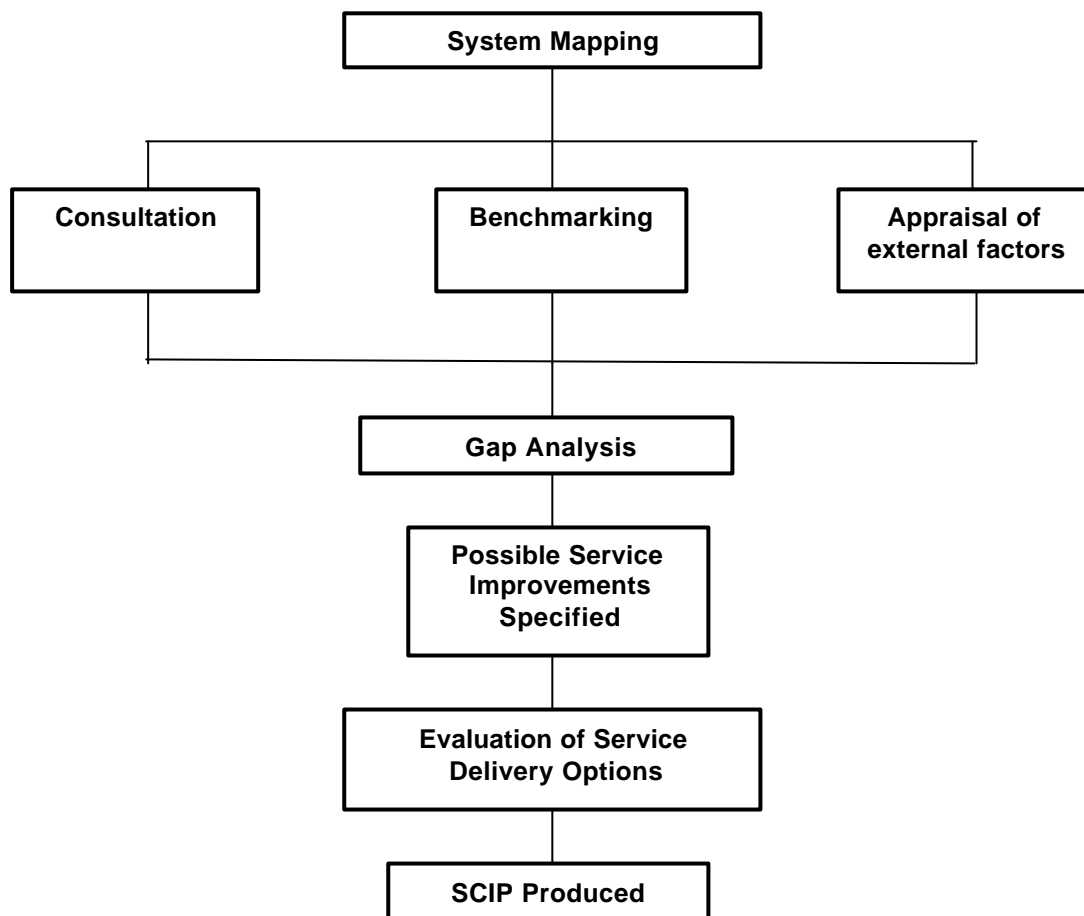
9.2 It is considered that the Elections Team provides an excellent service which can be improved in terms of cost and quality if the service developments and efficiency savings are implemented.

¹ A breakdown of the net costs of the functions is set out in Appendix 3C(5)

APPENDIX 1 REVIEW METHODOLOGY

1 THE REVIEW PROCESS

The following flowchart shows the basic review process



2 APPLICATION OF THE 4C'S OF BEST VALUE

2.1 Challenge

The reason why the function is undertaken is not open to challenge - it is a statutory duty. The Review therefore concentrated on the manner in which the function is delivered.

The first part of the Review process was to map the current systems in operation. The services were broken down into the following component parts.

- ◆ Nomination issues
- ◆ Provision of polling stations
- ◆ Provision of stationery and sundries
- ◆ Provision of polling equipment
- ◆ Absent voting
- ◆ Polling arrangements for disabled electors
- ◆ Counting arrangements
- ◆ Count security
- ◆ Relationship with the media
- ◆ Statutory advertising
- ◆ Candidates claims and expenses
- ◆ Retention and disposal of documents
- ◆ Recharging expenditure

For each element a number of questions were posed, as follows:-

- ◆ Why are the functions provided?
- ◆ How are they provided and how could they be provided?
- ◆ Who provides them at present and who could provide them?
- ◆ What links exist to functions of the Council?

The answers to these questions provided information to establish various options for delivering the service both as a whole and for each of the component parts.

These options were then compared against legislative constraints.

2.2 **Compare**

In order to compare the work of the Elections Team with other local authorities a benchmarking questionnaire was circulated to neighbouring authorities and members of the District Audit family who had agreed to take part.

The questionnaire covered general issues about the authorities, the processes used in conducting elections, costs and efforts made to increase turnout.

Ten responses were received to the benchmarking survey. These were from East Dorset District Council, Winchester City Council, Mendip District Council, Richmondshire District Council, South Somerset District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Rushmoor Borough Council and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council.

However on some areas the authorities could not provide the information required and the number reduces to seven.

2.3 **Consult**

The main consultation mechanisms employed during the review were:-

- ◆ A survey using the People's Voice in June 1999 (response rate - 72%)
- ◆ A questionnaire circulated to all candidates following the District and Parish Elections in 1999 (response rate - 71%)
- ◆ Appraisal forms circulated following the training of Presiding Officers in connection with the European Election in June 1999
- ◆ A straw poll of polling staff undertaken by email
- ◆ Response forms circulated to postal voters and electors during the Whiteparish By-election in May 2000

2.4 **Compete**

Consideration of the competitiveness of the function was based on an assessment over 4 areas: the Returning Officer, core election staff, polling and counting staff and supplies and services issues.

Each of these areas was compared against information received from the benchmarking exercise and legal requirements.

APPENDIX 2

**EXAMPLE OF CONTESTED DISTRICT ELECTION TIMETABLE
(OLD RULES)**

DAY	ACTION (STATUTORY DEADLINES IN BOLD)	NOTES
Election day -12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Check stocks of stationery and forms and order as required ◆ Prepare list of polling stations and allocation of voters thereto ◆ Make preliminary arrangements for use of rooms as polling and counting stations ◆ Seek indication of staff availability for election day 	
-10 weeks	Draft Notice of Election	<p>This notice must state:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The place & times at which nomination papers are to be delivered ◆ The date by which applications to vote by post or proxy must reach the Returning Officer <p>It should also:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Be signed by the Returning Officer ◆ State the number of councillors to be elected ◆ Bear the date for publication ◆ State who printed and published the notice ◆ Include information on completing nomination papers and make reference to corrupt and illegal practices
-5 weeks	Prepare sets of nomination papers, consents to nomination, RPPA certificates, forms for returns and declarations of expenses, candidates guides and sets of registers for prospective candidates	

DAY	ACTION	NOTES
-25 days	Publication of Notice of Election	<p>This usually takes place earlier to allow prospective candidates time to complete and return nomination papers</p> <p>The notice must be displayed at the Council's main offices and conspicuously in the electoral area (the wards and constituent parishes)</p>
-25 to -19 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Receipt and examination of nomination papers and candidates' consents to nomination and (if necessary) certificates of authorisation issued by political parties ◆ Make arrangements for printing of poll cards 	<p>The validity of each nomination paper is assessed against the relevant rules and notices of validity/invalidity issued.</p> <p>Nomination papers must state the candidate's:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Full names (surname first) ◆ Home address in full; and ◆ If desired, a description <p>It must be subscribed by two electors for the ward contested as proposer and seconder and by eight other electors for the ward as assenting to the nomination. Each subscription must show the elector's number as stated in the Electoral Register.</p> <p>The consent to nomination must state the candidate's qualification for election and that he/she is not disqualified. It must be attested by one witness.</p> <p>The description of the candidate may not be more than six words. A description which may lead voters to associate the candidate with a registered political party must be accompanied by a certificate (the RPPA certificate) issued by or on behalf of that Party's nominating officer</p>

DAY	ACTION	NOTES
-19 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Deadline for delivery of nomination papers (not later than noon) ◆ Drafting of ballot papers ◆ Confirm booking of polling stations etc and transportation arrangements for polling booths ◆ Final check of stock and presiding officers' equipment, etc ◆ Draft notice to candidates on the time and place for the issue of postal votes 	Ballot papers must be produced in the prescribed form with particulars taken from the nomination papers.
-17 days	Publication of statement as to persons nominated(not later than noon)	This notice shows the details of the persons who have been nominated and reasons why any person's nomination has been declared invalid
-16 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Delivery of notices of withdrawal of candidature (not later than noon) ◆ Notice in writing of appointment of election agents (not later than noon) ◆ Complete all arrangements for use of polling stations and count centres ◆ Arrange for poll cards to be printed ◆ Prepare list of polling stations ◆ Advise Police of arrangements ◆ Commence preparation of ballot boxes 	<p>Each candidate may appoint one election agent. Their main duties are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To pay the candidate's election expenses ◆ To obtain from the candidate a statement of his/her personal expenses ◆ To make the return and declaration of expenses
-14 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Complete arrangements for election staff - send notices of appointment together with "Requirements of Secrecy" ◆ Prepare certificates of employment on the day of poll ◆ Write to candidates to explain the statutory provisions relating to polling and counting agents and to indicate the upper limit of counting agents per candidate 	Certificates of employment allow polling staff to vote in the polling station in which they are working so long as it is in the same electoral area as their allotted polling station.

DAY	ACTION	NOTES
-13 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepare arrangements for issue of postal ballot papers ◆ Proof ballot papers and submit for printing ◆ Advise candidates of counting procedures and arrangements for opening postal ballot papers 	
-11 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Deadline for applications to be treated as an absent voter (not later than 5.00 pm) ◆ Print absent voters lists 	
-8 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Issue of postal ballot papers ◆ Issue poll cards 	<p>Postal ballot papers - The Returning Officer is required to send to each person entitled to vote by post:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A ballot paper (stamped with the official mark) ◆ A declaration of identity ◆ An envelope for their return to him (the covering envelope) ◆ A smaller envelope marked "ballot paper envelope" bearing the number of the ballot paper <p>Poll cards are issued to all electors except postal voters. These cards must contain:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The name of the Council ◆ The name of the Ward ◆ The name and qualifying address of the elector ◆ The date and hours of the poll ◆ The situation of the elector's allotted polling station

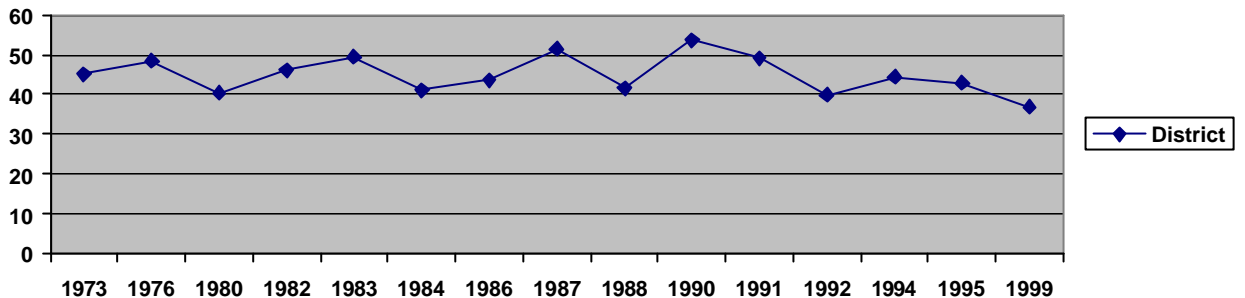
DAY	ACTION	NOTES
-6 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Publish Notice of Poll ◆ Send to each election agent a description of the polling districts, polling stations and persons entitled to vote thereat ◆ Deadline for applications to be treated as an absent voter due to sudden changes in health or employment in connection with the election (not later than 5.00 pm) ◆ Issue of postal ballot papers to those listed above 	<p>The Notice of Poll must state:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The day and hours fixed for the poll ◆ The number of councillors to be elected ◆ The particulars of each candidate remaining validly nominated ◆ The names of all persons signing a candidate's nomination paper
-5 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Receipt of notices of appointment of polling and/or counting agents ◆ Send tickets for admission to count plus copies of "requirements of secrecy" ◆ Check contents of ballot boxes ◆ Prepare lists of persons entitled to be at each polling station, the opening of postal ballot papers and the count ◆ Briefing for security staff at count 	<p>Polling agents are appointed by the candidate to check for impersonation in polling stations. They are not tellers (persons seeking to find out who have or have not voted) who have no legal status.</p> <p>Counting agents are appointed to oversee the count on behalf of candidates eg to ensure that votes are split correctly between the candidates and to highlight any doubtful ballot papers.</p>
-2 days	Briefing of presiding officers and issue of ballot boxes	
-1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Delivery of polling booths to polling stations ◆ First opening of postal ballot paper envelopes ◆ Complete preparation for count 	

DAY	ACTION	NOTES
0	ELECTION DAY AND COUNT	<p>Polling hours between 8.00 am and 9.00 pm</p> <p>The count is split into two parts:-</p> <p>(1) A check that the number of papers received at the count centre is the same as those issued at the polling stations (the verification)</p> <p>(2) The division of votes between the candidate's and the counting of the votes for each candidate.</p>
+1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Publication of the declaration of result of poll ◆ Sort and store election documents and materials ◆ Ensure claim forms for travelling and subsistence have been received from staff ◆ Pay staff 	
+35 days	Deadline for receipt of return and declaration of election expenses	

APPENDIX 3A THE NATIONAL PICTURE

1 THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Local electoral turnout is the subject of concern amongst politicians, practitioners and academics.



The above chart shows that in 1999 on average 37% of electors voted at "all out" District Elections and the trend is gradually downwards. The turnout for these types of councils is generally higher than for elections to other types of local authorities eg Metropolitan Districts, Unitary Authorities and London Boroughs.

One of the main issues faced as part of the review was to explore what effect the work of the Elections Team could have to change this downward trend and what aspects were dependent upon other factors eg socio economic and political factors.

2 RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY THE DETR

Research conducted by the DETR¹ has shown that the ability of local authorities to influence turnout is limited. The main findings of this research are summarised below.

- 1 There is little indication that electoral budgets have any appreciable impact on turnout levels.
- 2 There is little evidence that the wide range of local authority initiatives and practices to increase registration and participation have yet had a positive effect on voter turnout. Only one variable, the ratio of postal votes to the size of the electorate was positively significant.
- 3 There is great difficulty in assessing the impact of socio-economic variables on turnout. However the regression analysis used by the DETR suggests that such variables have less influence than previous studies have shown.
- 4 The main political influences on electoral turnout are:-
 - ◆ Majorities at previous elections - increases in the majority of a party at one election will result in a lower turnout at the next election.
 - ◆ Electorate size - Smaller electorates produce higher turnouts
 - ◆ The ratio of vacancies to the electorate - more candidates per elector - the higher the turnout.

¹ DETR's report entitled "Turnout at local elections: influences on levels of voter registration and electoral participation" published in May 2000

- ◆ Multiple member wards - single member wards reduce turnout by nearly 2%.
- ◆ The number of parties contesting the election
- ◆ The partisanship of the ward - High shares of Liberal Democrat vote have a positive effect the converse is true for Labour and to a lesser extent the Conservatives.

APPENDIX 3B CONSULTATION

1 GENERAL SATISFACTION LEVELS

The People's Voice Survey in 1999 and the Candidate's Survey showed the following levels of satisfaction with the overall conduct of the local elections.

Group	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neither (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Very dissatisfied (%)
Candidates	45.49	44.52	8.03	1.46	0.49
Public	35.9	44.3	15.6	2.8	1.4

2 THE NOMINATION PROCESS

2.1 Hearing about the Election

The majority of candidates heard about the Election from a parish clerk (189) or a political party (68).

Only 16 stated that they had heard about the Election from an advert in a newspaper and 18 from a notice in their village/neighbourhood.

Nomination Packs were obtained from

- ◆ A parish clerk - 241
- ◆ Democratic Services Unit - 115
- ◆ Political party - 60

2.2 The Nomination Pack

404 candidates (91.6%) stated that they had no difficulty filling in the nomination papers.

Of the 8.4% who experienced difficulty the reasons given were:-

- ◆ Clarity of the information
- ◆ Expenses

Two considered that examples should be provided in the pack.

Satisfaction with the nomination pack was as follows:-

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
27.17%	51.14%	18.04%	3.42%	0.23%

3 **STAFFING ELECTIONS**

3.1 **Attitudes to Elections Staff**

27.8% of candidates responding to the survey stated that they had contacted central election staff during the election period

The main ways of contacting the staff were by telephone (46%) and personal visit (37%).

Of those who responded:-

- ◆ 98.48% considered the staff were polite
- ◆ 97.83% considered that the staff were helpful
- ◆ 94.44% received a prompt reply
- ◆ 91.6% received all the information they required

3.2 **Attitudes to Polling Staff**

In both the Candidates Survey and the 1999 People's Voice Survey respondents claiming to have visited a polling station were asked if they "felt the polling staff were helpful" - 95.71% of candidates and 91.5% of panellists agreed with this statement.

3.3 **Polling Staff - The Internal Staffing Situation**

The Council's present policy is to allow internal staff to undertake polling duties without the need to take either leave or flexi-leave.

A survey was undertaken, at random, of 30 internal staff involved in polling duty to gauge their views on whether they would still be prepared to undertake these duties if they were required to take leave/flexi-leave.

The responses to this question were:-

- ◆ 5 stated that they were prepared to undertake polling duties if leave/flexi was required
- ◆ 2 stated that they wouldn't unless pay was increased
- ◆ 2 stated "no" but would consider if time off in lieu was granted
- ◆ 2 stated that they had to take leave/flexi-leave already
- ◆ 19 stated that they would not be prepared to undertake polling duty if leave/flexi-leave was required

One respondent stated that the main problem with election duty was getting the agreement of their supervisor/service unit head.

3.4 Polling Staff Training

Staff training was evaluated for the European Parliamentary Elections in 1999. The results were as follows:-

	Agree Strongly	Agree a little	Neither agree nor Disagree	Disagree a little	Disagree strongly
Was the Training Clear?	69.7%	27.5%	2.8%	0%	0%
Discussion/Question sessions handled well	70.1%	27.1%	2.8%	0%	0%
Standard/clarity of the trainers explanations	67.6%	29.6%	2.8%	0%	0%
	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Overall evaluation	77.9%	20.8%	1.3%	0%	0%

4 POLLING STATIONS

4.1 Candidates' Views

73.2% of candidates stated that they had visited a polling station on Election Day

Of these:-

- ◆ 88.19% agreed that it was in the best place in their area
- ◆ 90.99% felt it was easily accessible
- ◆ 91.64% felt that the polling station was well laid out
- ◆ 87.29% thought it was easily recognisable

The main areas where concern was expressed about the situation and accessibility of polling stations were

- ◆ Bulford
- ◆ Fovant
- ◆ West Tisbury
- ◆ Bishopdown and Laverstock

The problems at Bishopdown and Laverstock have now been overcome in consultation with the local ward members. Bulford, Fovant and West Tisbury are considered to be impossible to solve within current polling districts due to lack of available halls.

(NOTE: In recent years there has also been problems using school premises due to security considerations and the forced closure of schools is not supported by the Local Education Authority).

4.2 **Public Views**

Respondents from the People's Voice provided the following views on polling stations:-

	% of Panel Agreeing Strongly or Slightly
◆ The Polling Station was in the best possible place	90.3
◆ The Polling Station was easily accessible	93.3
◆ The Polling Station was well laid out	85.8
◆ The Polling Station was easily recognisable	84.9

5 **AWARENESS OF ELECTIONS**

Awareness of elections has been very difficult to measure, as research was not undertaken after the 1999 Local Elections.

However during the recent Whiteparish By-election return cards were sent to every postal voter and were handed out by polling station staff. Electors were asked "*How did you find out about the Whiteparish Ward By-election on 4th May 2000*"

The results were as follows:-

Council Leaflet	54
Candidates/Agents	104
Notices	82
Word of Mouth	31

These results must be treated with caution because of the small sample size and at by-elections campaigning by political parties is more concentrated than for District-wide elections.

6 **COUNTING ARRANGEMENTS**

Candidates' satisfaction with counting arrangements for the 1999 Local Elections was as follows:-

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
51.48%	36.5%	6.51%	5.33%	1.18%

7 ATTITUDES TO ELECTORAL PILOTS

In June 2000 participants in the People's Voice were asked which of a number of initiatives would assist them to vote more regularly. The results were as follows:-

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Voting on a day other than Thursday	25	75
Polling stations open longer	18.1	81.9
Voting on more than 1 day	47.1	51.9
Voting in any polling station	48.2	52.9
Voting by telephone	50.9	49.1
Voting by post	62.2	37.8
Voting by the internet	35.8	64.2

APPENDIX 3C BENCHMARKING

1 INTRODUCTION

In some instances the benchmarking information set out below shows Salisbury District's results against percentile information for the benchmarking group.

For information percentiles are thresholds of values in a series of numbers. The 75th Percentile is the threshold between the upper 25% and the remainder and the 25th Percentile is the threshold between the lower 25% and the remainder.

It is hoped that this will provide easier reference than providing individual figures for each of the authorities.

2 CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

The following information shows that Salisbury District has a relatively large electorate, a high number of councillors and a very high number of service voters.

2.1 Electorate Size (2000 Register)

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
85714	92205	82671	72063

2.2 Council Members

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
58	57	46	44

2.3 Council Wards

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
36	36	32	25

2.4 Parishes

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
68	94	68	51

2.5 Percentage of Special Category Electors included in the 2000 Register

	SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
Attainers	1.01%	1.24%	1.09%	1.09%
Service Voters	2.12%	1.44%	0.81%	0.55%
Over 70's	15.96%	17.44%	15.0%	12.33%

The percentage of overseas and crown electors with the electorates of Salisbury District and the benchmarking partners were negligible.

3 **TURNOUT LEVELS - LOCAL ELECTIONS 1999**

Turnout levels for the combined local elections in 1999 were relatively high compared to the benchmarking group.

3.1 **District Council Elections**

SDC Result	75th%ile	Median	25th%ile
39.29%	39.76%	38%	34%

3.2 **Parish Council Elections**

SDC Result	75th%ile	Median	25th%ile
44.78%	45%	43%	38%

4 **CONTESTED ELECTIONS IN 1999**

4.1 **District Council Wards Contested**

SDC Result	75th%ile	Median	25th%ile
98.3%	100%	98%	97%

4.2 **Parish Council Elections Contested**

SDC Result	75th%ile	Median	25th%ile
23.1%	39%	23%	22%

4.3 **Salisbury District - Contested Parish Council Elections 1999**

In 1999 the percentage of uncontested parish council elections rose by 16.1% compared to 1995. 33 parish councils (48.5%) did not have contested elections in both 1995 and 1999.

Of the uncontested elections, the number of candidates short of holding an election is set out below:-

	1995	1999
Same number of candidates as seats	19	24
One under	12	8
Two under	4	15
Three or more under	7	6

5 ELECTION COSTS

The following tables shows an analysis based on the actual costs of holding the 1999 local elections. The median and percentile figures are based on comparisons with the benchmarking group by sub-heading and therefore, except for the SDC column, will not add up.

	SDC (£)	75%ile (£)	Median (£)	25%ile (£)
Staff	41600	45616	41600	31270
Transport	2241	1964	1763	600
Supplies/Services	41445	37000	25562	16793
Recharges	6340	15656	9668	0
Gross Expenditure	91626	91626	80045	61926
Income (parish recharges)	-6726	-17552	-6726	-6049
Net Expenditure	84900	84900	56520	52221
Net Expenditure per elector	0.99	1.81	0.99	0.74

The results suggest that transport and supplies and services costs should be examined (see Appendix 4). However the high costs in these areas may result from the large and predominantly rural nature of the area.

6 FUNDING JOINT ELECTIONS

For combined District/Parish elections, from the benchmarking survey:-

- ◆ 2 Authorities (including Salisbury District Council) meet all costs except those attributable directly to the Parish
- ◆ 1 meets all costs
- ◆ 7 split the costs of the elections equally with the Parish Councils.
- ◆ 1 Authority is unparished.

The following table shows the highest and lowest percentage of contested parish council elections by recharging policy.

Recharge to Parish	Highest and Lowest Percentage of Elections Contested
No recharge	13.16%
Directly Attributable only	23.1% - 10%
50% Recharge	50% - 22.3%

The above information suggests that Salisbury District's recharging policy is not in conformity with the majority of the benchmarking group and that, in general, varying policies on recharging parishes do not influence whether or not parish elections are contested. It is therefore considered that this Council's recharging policy should be reviewed.

7 POLLING STATIONS

The following information shows that Salisbury District has a low ratio of electors to polling stations and a relatively high number of polling stations. This is attributed to the predominantly rural nature of the area. However this low ratio does influence costs and means that a high number of polling staff are required.

7.1 Numbers Against Benchmarking Group

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
113	122	104	41

7.2 Electors per Polling Station against Benchmarking Group

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
758.5	924.4	819.3	797.8

8 POSTAL VOTING

The percentage of postal voters within the electorate for the 1999 Local Elections compared to the benchmarking group was as follows:-

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
2.04%	2.03%	1.44%	1.19%

9 POLLING STAFF

The Council's present policy is to allow internal staff to undertake polling duties without the need to take either leave or flexi-leave. This policy is in accordance with all respondents to the Benchmarking Survey except one.

None of the respondents to the survey stated that they found it easy to recruit polling staff.

The percentage of polling staff recruited internally was as follows:-

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
50%	51%	49%	35%

10 COUNTING ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 Votes per Counter

SDC	75 th ile	Median	25 th ile
183	228	202	183

The low votes to counter ratio for Salisbury District is attributed to the use of decentralised counts. However the use of centralised counting for full District and Parish Elections is considered unfeasible due to the numbers of people and distances involved.

11 INCREASING TURNOUT UNDER PRESENT RULES

11.1 Views of the Benchmarking Group

The participants in the benchmarking group were asked to score a number of initiatives for increasing turnout which were taken from research undertaken by the University of Plymouth's Elections Centre¹. The Group were asked to score the initiatives from 5 = "extremely effective" to 1 = "No effect at all". The results, based on the responses of 9 local authorities, were as follows:-

	Number Used	Average Effectiveness (Score 5-1)
Circulated pro forma and information on what absent voting is, who qualifies and the timetable for registration	3	2.67
Carried out a special canvass to identify potential absent voters.	1	5
Sought the co-operation of political parties in extending the absent voter lists.	1	4
Experimented with larger/coloured poll cards.	1	1
Despatched poll cards earlier, together with information about and closing date for absent voter applications.	4	3.5
Improved the design and made the wording of poll cards easier to understand.	0	-
Included more information (eg, a map) about the location of the polling station on the poll card.	0	-
Consciously reviewed the location of polling stations at each election.	5	2
Consulted local organisations on problems of access.	1	5
Provided additional facilities, for example, ramps; special polling booths; Braille ballot papers where necessary.	6	2.33
Undertaken leaflet drops to all poll card recipients urging people to use their vote.	1	1
Undertaken media campaigns about the election	4	1.75
Undertaken a campaign to raise civic awareness amongst young people	1	2

¹ "Enhancing local election turnout" a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by the University of Plymouth's Election Centre and published in 1996.

11.2 **The SDC Experience**

The Elections Team has undertaken the following initiatives:-

- ◆ Absent voters are identified during the electoral registration process
- ◆ Polling stations are reviewed at each election
- ◆ Ramps and special polling booths are made available where there is shown to be a historic demand
- ◆ Media campaigns are undertaken before the election

For the recent Whiteparish and Nadder By-elections flyers advertising the election and including absent vote application forms were sent to every household.

The results of this exercise are inconclusive as this action yielded 23.34% fewer postal voters in Whiteparish and 81.25% more postal voters in Nadder.

Also the return card survey showed that more people heard about the election from notices and candidates/agents than through the flyer.

For the Whiteparish By-election the cost of printing and posting the flyer per elector was £0.18.

APPENDIX 4 DELIVERING THE SERVICE

1 INTRODUCTION

It is intended to examine procurement issues in respect of four areas as follows:-

- ◆ The Returning Officer
- ◆ Core Election Staff
- ◆ Polling and Count Staff
- ◆ Supplies and Services

The "Returning Officer" and his staff are paid in accordance with scales of fees and expenses set by the Home Office (for European and Parliamentary Elections), the County Council (for County Council Elections) and in conjunction with the other District Councils in the County (for District and Parish Elections and Parish Polls).

The fees for District and Parish Elections are set every two years and are usually lower than the national scales.

2 THE RETURNING OFFICER

The Council has a duty to appoint an officer to be the Returning Officer for District and Parish Elections.

At present the functions of the Returning Officer are undertaken by the Chief Executive of the Council.

It is usual for the Returning Officer to delegate day to day management of elections to the Head of Democratic Services and Senior Democratic Services Officer who act as Deputy Returning Officers

In view of the high profile nature of elections and the links to the Chief Executive's role as the Electoral Registration Officer it is considered that the present arrangements are appropriate.

3 CORE ELECTION STAFF

The Elections Team undertake most of the day to day management and administration of the elections on behalf of the Returning Officer.

This function could be contracted out although the market is very limited.

It is not considered that any benefits would accrue from externalising this function as the Elections Team also performs electoral registration duties (which must remain in-house) and payments are based on national or county-wide scales of fees.

In addition the staff provide added value in terms of assistance to the Returning Officer for the Westbury Constituency in respect of the Western Parishes of the District and by providing advice and assistance to parish councils.

4 **POLLING AND COUNT STAFF**

Polling and count staff are recruited from both within the Council and from the community and are paid in accordance with the relevant scale of fees.

Arising from the staffing difficulties in 1999 the Elections Team have sought to bolster the number of polling staff on the database. New Council staff are given application forms at their inductions and a recruitment advert has been placed in the Citizen. The outcome of these initiatives is still awaited.

Some authorities (including one of the benchmarking partners) have policies which require Council staff to take leave or flexi-leave when undertaking polling duties. However these authorities tend to be more urban areas where there is a high ratio of electors to polling stations and the staffing requirements at elections are not so acute.

Given the outcome of the straw poll it is not considered that Council staff should be forced to take leave or flexi-leave. Indeed it is considered that if such a policy was introduced it could jeopardise the proper conduct of an election.

Arising from the straw poll there is concern at the lack of consistency across the service units on releasing staff. It is proposed that in the interests of fairness and consistency the policy on releasing staff should be strengthened so that service unit heads are required to release those staff wishing to participate unless in the opinion of the Chief Executive it will cause severe operational problems.

As District-wide elections only take place on one or two days per year it is not considered that this change in policy should cause difficulties for service units.

5 **SUPPLIES AND SERVICES**

The costs of transport and supplies and services in running District-wide elections causes some concern in both instances being in the upper quartile against the benchmarking group.

A breakdown of the costs under the supplies and services head shows the following:-

	£
Hire of Premises	14,297
Equipment Purchase	1271
Equipment Maintenance	1649
External Printing	8627
Internal Printing	262
Publications	787
Postages	9714
Advertising	4838
TOTAL	41445

Where possible all contracts are let on a competitive basis . However in some cases, due to the specialist nature of the work, only one supplier is available.

In general terms the high level of expenditure is attributed to the size of the District and the number of polling stations used.

However it is considered that the amount spent on transport and supplies and services as stated above can be reduced by £2000.

The hire of premises figure is overstated. In 1999 a European Election was held one month after the District and Parish Elections. The verification and count for the European Elections was held at the City Hall. Under the Home Office rules the costs of using Council owned premises cannot be reclaimed and therefore falls on this budget head. An attempt will be made in future to find a privately owned venue for such counts so that the maximum amount can be reclaimed from Government

The "equipment purchase" head includes £826 for new ballot boxes. Reimbursement is being sought from the Home Office for these.

The Team is seeking to reduce the costs of delivering and collecting polling booths from polling stations. In addition to the proposed pilot scheme (see para 7.2.1 of the main report) there are two other mechanisms which could result in savings on this budget head.

- ◆ Last year many of the polling booths were vandalised following a break-in at the storage area. A settlement has been agreed with the Council's insurers. It is hoped to use these funds to purchase new lightweight collapsible booths which can be transported by presiding officers in their cars. However further consultation with the presiding officers is necessary before this saving can be realised.
- ◆ The Team is also consulting with the hirers of polling stations to seek approval to store the booths on site on a full-time basis.

A guesstimate of the likely savings on transport is £1000.

APPENDIX 5 GLOSSARY

Absent Voters	Persons allowed to vote by post, proxy or postal proxy at elections.
Candidates	Persons standing for election
Candidates expenses	Candidates must make returns and declarations on the expenses they have incurred in seeking election. There are limits on amount of expenditure for each type of election.
Casual Vacancies	Vacancies in seats on councils which may lead to by-elections caused by a number of factors including death, resignation, failure to accept office, bankruptcy, etc
Constituency	The electoral area which returns a Member of Parliament. The Salisbury Constituency covers most of the District except for certain parishes in the west which fall under the Westbury Constituency.
Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)	The Officer responsible in law for the preparation and publication of the electoral register and absent voter lists
Median	The number in the middle of a set of numbers ie half the values will be greater and half less. A more robust average than the mean.
Nomination Process	In order for candidates to be validly nominated the Returning Officer must receive the following documents before the statutory deadline, in the correct form and containing the correct information:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Nomination Paper ◆ The Candidate's consent to nomination ◆ A certificate of the Party's nominating officer (if the candidate is seeking to stand on behalf of a Registered Political Party)
People's Voice	The citizens panel for Wiltshire. There are about 1000 members of the panel in South Wiltshire.
Percentiles	Thresholds of values in a set of numbers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 75th perc = the threshold between the upper 25% and the remainder ◆ 25th perc = the threshold between the lower 25% and the remainder

Poll cards	These provide details of an election eg the hours of the poll and the situation of the polling station and must be sent to all electors (except those on the absent voters list).
Poll clerks	Persons employed by the Returning Officer to assist Presiding Officers.
Polling District	A division of a constituency.
Polling screens	Compartments which allow voters to cast their vote in secrecy
Polling Station	A venue within (or in certain circumstances just outside) a polling district where persons must attend to cast their vote unless they are absent voters.
Postal Voters	Voters who have applied and are eligible to vote by post
Presiding Officers	Officers employed by the Returning Officer who are present in polling stations to issue and receive ballot papers and to ensure that the poll is properly conducted.
Proxy voters	Voters who apply for another person to be able to vote on their behalf and meet the prescribed requirements
Recharges	Charges levied for the performance of a service on behalf of another service unit or outside organisations
Returning Officer	The person legally responsible for conducting elections in accordance with the statutory rules
Statutory Notices	The Returning Officer must publish, in accordance with the statutory timetable:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The notice of election ◆ The statement of persons nominated ◆ The notice of names and addresses of election agents ◆ The Notice of Poll ◆ The declaration of the result of the poll
Turnout	The percentage of electors who actually vote at a particular election
Wards	Sub-divisions of the District for which one or more Councillors are elected.

APPENDIX 6 LOCAL ELECTORAL PILOTS

1 INTRODUCTION

The Representation of the People Act 2000 allows experiments in the conduct of local elections, subject to the agreement of the Home Office.

A number of pilot schemes were conducted during the local elections in May 2000. Details of these are set out below.

2 THE PILOT SCHEMES

Postal Voting on Demand	Four authorities conducted pilots in which electors were encouraged to apply for and use a postal vote on demand.
All Postal Voting	Seven authorities conducted pilots whereby voters in selected wards were able to vote by post only.
Early or Advance Voting	15 authorities had schemes to allow electors to cast their vote in advance of polling day. On average the facility was offered over the equivalent of more than two complete working days.
Extended Polling Hours	Two authorities extended voting hours commencing an hour earlier and finishing an hour later than under the local election rules.
Weekend Polling	One authority conducted the election during the weekend following the traditional Thursday polling day.
Mobile Polling Stations	Three authorities ran schemes to enable people in residential homes and sheltered accommodation to vote "at home" but also "in person"
Freepost Communication	One authority offered each candidate the chance to have one elections communication delivered to each household
Electronic Counting	Two authorities counted the votes electronically, each using a different method
Electronic Voting and Counting	In three authorities votes were cast and counted electronically using a touch screen voting machine

3 **EVALUATION OF THE PILOT SCHEMES**

The Home Office posed four questions to those authorities conducting the pilot schemes. The attached table provides an overall answer to those questions for each type of pilot.

4 **CONCLUSIONS**

Professors Colin Rallings and Michael Thresher of the Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre at the University of Plymouth were commissioned to evaluate the electoral pilots on behalf of the Local Government Association¹. Their main findings were as follows:-

- ◆ Only postal voting appeared to have the potential to significantly increase local election turnout
- ◆ Turnout increases were at least partly related to how easy it was to cast a vote
- ◆ Voting by post did not appear to help or hinder any particular party
- ◆ Early and/or extended voting added little to turnout but did perform a useful public service
- ◆ Providing mobile polling stations for those in residential or other institutional care could help prevent electoral abuse
- ◆ The single experiment with weekend voting was not a success, but should be tried again
- ◆ Providing a freepost service for party election addresses appeared to make no impact
- ◆ Electronic voting and counting has the potential to provide a faster and more accurate count but requires voter education and rigorous prior technical testing
- ◆ There was no evidence that any of the pilots led to an increase in electoral fraud
- ◆ All pilots involved net increases in expenditure, although these varied between schemes and councils
- ◆ Most electors welcomed the new arrangements, found them easy to use and would wish to use them again in the future.

¹ LGA Research Report 13 "Elections - the 21st Century Model: An evaluation of the May 2000 Local Electoral Pilots"

Overall Summary Evaluation of the Pilots

	Postal Votes on Demand	All Postal Votes	Extended Hours	Early voting	Weekend voting	Mobile Stations	Freepost	Electronic Voting & Counting
Was the turnout higher than it would otherwise have been?	Sometimes	Yes	Marginally	Marginally	No	n/a	n/a	n/a
Did voters find the new arrangements easy to use?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Did the new procedures lead to any increase in impersonation or other electoral fraud?	No positive evidence	No positive evidence	No	No	No	? decrease	n/a	No
Did the procedures lead to an increase or a saving in expenditure?	Net increase	Heavy net increase	Increase	Increase - modest to heavy	Heavy increase	Modest increase	Increase	Increase - variable

APPENDIX 7
WORK PROGRAMME 2001 - 2006

Year	Elections	Implementation of Proposed Service Developments/Efficiency Savings
2001/2002	County Council Elections (May 2001) Parliamentary Election (possibly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Introduction of RPA 2000 - postal voting on demand, introduction of combined poll card/postal vote application and introduction of measures to assist voters with disabilities ◆ Introduction of revised policy on releasing internal staff
2002/2003	Parliamentary Election (possibly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementation of District Ward Boundary Review & review of Polling Districts ◆ Submission of electoral pilot to Home Office ◆ Access survey of polling stations ◆ Mechanisms to reduce transport costs introduced ◆ Review of policy on parish recharges
2003/2004	District and Parish Elections (May 2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Workshops for potential candidates introduced ◆ Review of information provided to candidates ◆ Introduction and evaluation of electoral pilot (if granted) ◆ Possible introduction of new parish council recharge policy
2004/2005	European Elections (June 2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review of Count Centre location
2005/2006	County Council Elections (May 2005)	
Unknown	Possible referendums on European Single Currency and political management structures	