

Equality of Opportunity Committee

EOC(3)-06-07(p2): 22 November 2007

Electoral Commission – Consultation on Performance Indicators

Purpose

1.1 As part of the Committee's inquiry into *Accessibility of polling stations in Wales*, evidence was received from Kay Jenkins of the Electoral Commission at Committee on 11 October 2007. As part of her presentation, Kay Jenkins advised Members that the Electoral Commission was introducing performance standards for electoral services which is a new statutory role that the Commission has.

1.2 The Commission published a consultation paper on draft performance standards for the administration of elections and referendums on 1 October. The analysis of responses will form the development of a range of indicators which the Electoral Commission will publish in spring 2008.

Recommendations

2.1 Members to consider the consultation paper and the Chair to write to the Electoral Commission with any recommendations they wish to make.

Committee Service
November 2007

Developing performance indicators for elections and referendums

Consultation paper

1 October 2007



Translations and other formats

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We are an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The objective of this consultation is to obtain views on a set of draft performance indicators for the administration of elections and referendums. The analysis of responses will then inform the development of a range of indicators which the Electoral Commission will publish in the spring of 2008. Ultimately, these performance indicators will form the basis of a full performance standards framework for elections and referendums.

1.2 Section 67 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA) inserted new sections 9A, 9B and 9C into the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). These sections allow the Commission to set and monitor performance standards for electoral services and to collect information on the costs of electoral services from Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Returning Officers (ROs) and Referendum Counting Officers (RCOs). This power is not directly applicable to Northern Ireland¹ and does not apply to Scottish local government elections.²

1.3 The new PERPA powers are broad and allow the Commission the scope to either focus its efforts on a specific area of electoral administration, or to use a broad approach and set indicators across the spectrum in the first instance. The Commission has chosen to focus first on electoral registration, but will also develop a performance standards framework for elections and referendums.

1.4 On 4 December 2006, the Commission published a consultation paper containing seven quantitative and four qualitative electoral registration indicators. By the close of the consultation on 26 January 2007, the Commission had received 48 responses. An analysis of the responses is available on the Commission's website. The revised electoral registration indicators were piloted from April to July 2007 with a range of local authorities and EROs from across Great Britain. The indicators were rolled out across Great Britain in September 2007.

1.5 The Commission is committed to having a full system of election and referendum standards in place by 2009, a year that includes the European Parliamentary elections. This timescale will allow for the first data collection of the indicators at the scheduled local elections in England and Wales in May 2008 and publication of the full performance standards framework by the end of 2008.

1.6 The Commission's approach to performance standards is focused on measuring performance to support improvement. Our preparatory work has concluded that a great deal of data is currently collected or obtained, but it is neither

¹ The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland is required to report annually on his performance, including in relation to three key registration objectives (Section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006). The incumbent Chief Electoral Officer has indicated that he is keen to be involved in the development and implementation of election event standards and may adopt on a voluntary basis those which are relevant and would add value in Northern Ireland.

² The Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) (LEARS) Bill enables Scottish Ministers to set performance standards for ROs at local government elections. Scottish Ministers have stated their view that these performance standards should be compatible with the standards the Commission will produce for Parliamentary elections.

uniform nor complete across the UK. Accordingly, our first stage will be focused on the collection of accurate and uniform data, as well as the design of support mechanisms for improvement and development.

1.7 The proposed election and referendum indicators have been developed through assessment of existing indicators in operation across the UK and other countries. However, as an integral part of this consultation exercise, the Commission would welcome suggestions for additional qualitative and quantitative indicators which could be considered.

1.8 This consultation paper includes reference to referendums as the legislation requires the Commission to ultimately develop standards for RCOs, as well as ROs. Therefore, the relevant draft indicators outlined in this paper are intended to be used to collect data from RCOs at referendums in the future. While some of the indicators may not be relevant at a referendum, by including them in this consultation paper the Commission will have indicators ready to be used at any future referendum.

Next steps

1.9 Following this consultation, the Commission will revise the draft indicators where appropriate and publish them early in 2008. The Commission plans to undertake a first round of data collection against the indicators with those ROs undertaking elections in May 2008, to determine the practicality of the measures and quantify the level of support required for a self-assessment process. This will allow time to determine the relevant performance standards for elections and to consult on them during autumn 2008.

1.10 The first data collection exercise will provide invaluable data to support the development of an appropriate and robust model for verification and auditing of the qualitative and quantitative data. The Commission can also assess the most effective process for collecting and reviewing qualitative data, as well as identifying if the indicators themselves are appropriate or useful.

1.11 The Commission will also at this time seek views from the electoral community as to what support and development may be required to improve performance in the administration of elections and referendums and how it should deliver such support.

Scope of the consultation

1.12 The paper discusses a number of proposed election and referendum performance indicators and asks for comment on the nature of each individual indicator and for views on the overall mix of proposed indicators.

1.13 Appendix B lists a series of additional questions that respondents may wish to consider when formulating their responses.

1.14 The Commission also intends to collect and analyse contextual information, which is designed to provide a more rounded view than the indicators are able to provide in isolation.

1.15 These indicators should also be considered in the context of the broader framework for electoral services performance standards (detailed in Chapter 2 of this document) and the relevant public service performance regimes elsewhere in the UK.

1.16 The Commission is seeking responses and input from any interested parties, including electoral administrators, political parties, devolved and central government departments and accessibility and disability groups. We would particularly welcome input from:

- **Returning Officers:** do the indicators measure areas of performance that are relevant and that are reasonably within the responsibility of the RO to deliver?
- **Electoral administrators:** in addition to the question of whether the indicators measure relevant areas of performance, how straightforward is it to collect and measure performance information in the areas proposed in this consultation paper?
- **Political parties and other representative organisations:** do the proposed indicators cover the areas of importance to you and support progress towards the shared vision for quality electoral services?

How to respond

1.17 This consultation paper outlines the Commission's proposed election and referendum indicators. The consultation paper raises a number of questions and issues for consideration, which are intended to stimulate and focus debate and to invite responses. Please send your responses to:

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1.18 The closing date for responses is **21 December 2007**. If you would like to provide your response in an alternative format please contact Lindsey Taber.

1.19 Respondents should include their name and address in their submission and, where relevant, details of the organisation or group they represent. The Commission may wish to publish or make available for inspection details of responses to this consultation paper. Should you wish for your name or response to remain confidential, please make this clear.

1.20 If you would like further information about any aspects of the performance standards programme, please visit www.electoralcommission.org.uk.

2 Background

A vision for quality electoral services

2.1 In 2006, the Electoral Commission consulted widely in developing a clear vision for quality electoral services across the UK. Table 1 (on page 6) outlines the broader vision for the basis of a quality electoral service with regard to electors, candidates and parties.

A framework for electoral services performance standards

2.2 The Commission has developed a performance standards framework which focuses on four performance areas that support the themes included in the vision. These are integrity, user focus, professionalism and value for money. This approach is in line with the views gathered from extensive consultation that the vision should inform the focus of the performance standards framework.

2.3 These performance areas also ensure a clear focus on the user perspective and on value for money, which both feature strongly within performance frameworks throughout the UK and will continue to do so.

Performance standards regimes

2.4 In developing the detail of the performance framework for electoral registration and election and referendum standards the Commission will, where possible, be aiming for synergy with existing performance standards regimes across the UK.

2.5 It is, however, vitally important that the systems for data collection and analysis, and the range and scale of indicators, are appropriate and extensive enough to provide robust and comparative data which can be used to drive performance improvement throughout the sector.

Table 1: Vision for the basis of quality electoral services

	This means electors can expect...	This means candidates and parties can expect...
Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to know information about them is accurate and to be clear how it is used their vote is confidential and they can make it free from pressure to know their vote is counted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> processes which are transparent and checked accurate results
User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a voting process that is easy to understand to have a choice of ways to vote to be able to vote in a way that suits their lifestyle and needs information and advice which is accurate, prompt and easy to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to know how to stand for election consistency of approach and realistic timescales clarity and impartiality in the process a clear process of redress
Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to know if they are eligible to register and vote to know how and when to register and what to do if they move to know where to get information and advice to know who and what they are voting for young people to be educated about registering and voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> those involved in administration of the process to be fully conversant with electoral law consistent application of electoral law and processes clear and timely information, advice and guidance an appropriate balance between speed and quality in the process
Value for money – efficient and effective service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective use of public money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> electoral administrators to have the right skills timely quality checks to be carried out

National occupational standards for electoral services

2.6 A parallel and complementary project is currently underway, aimed at developing National Occupational Standards (NOS) for electoral services. SkillsPlus, the local government strategic skills partnership (which represents the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland and the Wales Local Government Association), has commissioned the work, which is supported by the Electoral Commission and other key stakeholders.

2.7 The outcome will comprise of a set of nationally agreed units of competence that will detail all the functions that staff and managers need to carry out at every level, the standard of performance they must achieve and the knowledge and skills they need. These NOS will be approved by the UK regulatory authorities and can be used for a host of purposes, for example to:

- inform the continuing development of the Association of Electoral Administrators professional qualifications
- underpin training and development programmes
- provide the basis for performance management systems
- help develop job descriptions and person specifications
- assist in staff career progression

2.8 The NOS will complement the Commission's work on performance standards as the former describes the expected performance of individuals, whereas the latter addresses service-level standards.

Additional data sources

2.9 The Commission will also need to use data from non-electoral sources to construct baselines and comparisons throughout the performance standards programme. We acknowledge that some respondents may have concerns about the quality or reliability of these sources and that in some cases there is no single source of statistics for the UK. We will continue to discuss with relevant organisations what data sources exist or could be obtained and will update stakeholders on progress in this area.

Support and assistance

2.10 The Commission is already empowered to provide advice and assistance to Returning Officers (ROs). This is currently provided through guidance and advice services, briefing events, research and practical tools for use by ROs and their staff. It is anticipated that the Commission's work in this area will need to expand beyond the current focus of ensuring that all relevant officers know the requirements and expectations of the law to a more sustained emphasis on identifying and embedding good practice. In addition, the Commission may need to develop a system for supporting performance improvement if the indicator collection suggests such a need.

2.11 In 2006, the Commission announced an expansion of its advice and support services in England, in large part driven by the need to support both the development of the performance standards regime and the need to position itself better to support performance improvement in the future. Early in 2007, the Commission opened regional offices based in the North of England, the Midlands, the South and the South East to work with electoral colleagues throughout England. We have also repositioned our resources in Scotland and Wales to better answer these new demands. We seek through this consultation views on the likely levels of support needed for both the collection phase of the regime and then any performance improvement needs identified through the performance data.

3 Draft election and referendum performance indicators

3.1 This section outlines a total of 13 draft performance indicators for elections and referendums on which we are seeking views and comment. The overall objective for developing these indicators is to enable the collection of a range of data which can be analysed to provide a picture of current performance across the UK. Similar to the set of performance indicators for electoral registration, the draft indicators for elections and referendums contain a mixture of quantitative and qualitative measures. We expect that a self-assessment approach would be taken when reporting against the qualitative indicators.

3.2 We would welcome views on each of the proposed election and referendum indicators. We would particularly welcome comments and views in relation to two questions:

1. Is the overall mix of indicators appropriate and comprehensive?

The Electoral Commission accepts that there may not be consensus about the value or importance of some of the draft indicators, but is very keen to consult on the indicators listed below to understand the level of support for each indicator and the particular issues that may be of concern. We also seek suggestions for additional indicators.

2. Are the detailed definitions for each indicator appropriate?

It is important that, wherever possible, the proposed indicators measure performance relating to the key areas of concern in the electoral administration process. It is also equally important that the data is assessed and evaluated in conjunction with local contextual information relating to the size and scale of electoral registration provision, local demographic, economic and sociological factors, and the funding and resourcing of the function.

3.3 The proposed election and referendum indicators are set out in the format of the opening sections of the Audit Commission's Best Value Performance Indicators, with an accompanying narrative below each table. We would be particularly interested in suggestions of the detail that needs to be added to each indicator.

3.4 The Commission has also developed a range of assessment criteria which may help respondents evaluate each indicator. The criteria are listed in Appendix B.

Table 2: Indicator 1 – Project management

Title	Project management
Description	Examining the use of project management processes by the Returning Officers (RO).
Purpose/aim	To support the effective planning and management of elections and referendums.
Definition	The RO/RCO to provide self-assessment on (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the type of project management used – e.g. PRINCE2 or in-house system, and level to which it is implemented• whether a formalised project board structure is used to administer projects such as elections and referendums• whether staffing is required from outside of the electoral services team (e.g. IT support) during elections or referendums and, if so, how staff are recruited

3.5 The Commission has consistently emphasised the need for electoral processes to be carried out within an appropriately formalised project management framework. This indicator seeks information about the type of processes used by electoral service departments across the UK. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would contain self-assessment boxes against which ROs could assess themselves, with narrative boxes below each bullet point to allow descriptions of good practice to be included.

Table 3: Indicator 2 – Procurement of services

Title	Procurement of services
Description	Examining the procurement processes used by the RO/RCO.
Purpose/aim	To support effective procurement and management of services from external suppliers.
Definition	The RO to provide information on the following areas (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether contracts (annual or event-specific) are in place for the following services:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– printing ballot papers– postal vote opening– polling stations

3.6 The relationship between electoral service departments and external suppliers is an area of concern to the Commission due to the difficulties experienced at recent elections. Clear contracts need to exist in order for both parties to be sure of the expectations of the other. This indicator seeks assurances that these are in place for any service provided externally. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 4: Indicator 3 – Design and content of communications with electors

Title	Design and content of communications with electors
Description	Examining the accessibility and intelligibility of information contained in postal ballot packs and on poll cards.
Purpose/aim	To ensure communications with electors are well designed and support effective participation in elections.
Definition	<p>The RO to provide a narrative account relating to information contained in ballot packs and on poll cards, including information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the ballot pack has received an accessibility review and any suggestions made on the basis of this were implemented • whether the ballot pack follows guidelines on the use of font sizes and colour combinations • whether any decision was made to provide information in alternative languages and the reasons for this decision • whether the ballot pack has been reviewed by the Plain English Campaign and any suggestions made on the basis of this were implemented • whether the ballot pack contains a pictorial element to aid intelligibility • whether the poll cards include maps/directions to the polling station • the type of delivery method and an evaluation of how effective this method is • the printing – whether this is outsourced or in-house

3.7 It is vital that postal ballot packs and poll cards are clearly intelligible and accessible to the public. This indicator seeks, through self-assessment, assurances that the RO has considered accessibility issues when designing the postal ballot pack/poll card. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5. The Commission would anticipate this indicator involving narrative section(s) where the RO could provide more information on the best practice sections. The Commission would welcome suggestions on the activities against which ROs should assess themselves in this indicator.

Table 5: Indicator 4 – Issue of postal ballot packs

Title	Issue of postal ballot packs
Description	Time of issue of postal ballot packs counted back from polling day.
Purpose/aim	The prompt delivery of postal ballot packs means that people have sufficient opportunity to return their postal vote in time to be included in the count.
Definition	The RO to provide the dates of each issue and how many postal ballot packs were dispatched on each date over the election or referendum period.

3.8 In recent elections there has been concern over the time left to some voters to return their vote following the delivery of their postal ballots. This indicator attempts to discover the extent of this problem by asking ROs to provide the dates that their postal ballot packs were issued. It is anticipated that the Commission would ask for the range of days involved, as the ballot packs will go out on more than one day in many areas.

Table 6: Indicator 5 – Postal votes opening processes

Title	Postal votes opening processes
Description	A measure of the effectiveness of the processes used when opening postal votes.
Purpose/aim	To ensure that the processes employed by the RO/RCO support efficient and thorough opening and checking of postal votes.
Definition	The RO/RCO to provide information on the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the percentage of postal votes on which the RO/RCO checks the personal identifiers • the number of opening sessions • whether computer technology is used in the opening sessions and, if so, what role it plays

3.9 The opening of postal votes is an area significantly high-profile at the moment to warrant an individual indicator. At this stage of the process, the Commission is interested in discovering what processes are currently used by the RO when opening postal votes. Suggestions for further bullet points are encouraged. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 7: Indicator 6 – Recruitment, training and support for polling and counting staff

Title	Recruitment, training and support for polling and counting staff
Description	Examining the level and experience of staff employed to deliver the election or referendum on polling day (including the count), the training and support provided by the RO/RCO before polling day and activity undertaken by the RO/RCO to support staff throughout polling day and the count.
Purpose/aim	To ensure appropriately qualified and skilled staff are employed to deliver polling station and counting activities.
Definition	<p>The RO to provide a narrative account of the following aspects of staffing on polling day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of the method by which staff are recruited and where they are recruited from • what training is carried out, when this takes place and how training is evaluated • details of the experiences and skills of staff employed • the use of polling station inspectors • the use of count supervisors • procedures for observers/Commission representatives • method of evaluation

3.10 The knowledge and expertise of polling station staff can be important factors in determining the level of positive experience voters have on polling day. However, the Commission is also aware of the difficulty some ROs have in recruiting polling station staff. This indicator also seeks to gather data on how ROs recruit in order to share this best practice among ROs who are finding successful recruitment difficult. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 8: Indicator 7 – Accessibility and organisation of polling stations

Title	Accessibility and organisation of polling stations
Description	A measure of the accessibility of polling stations and the provision of information.
Purpose/aim	To ensure that polling stations are appropriately accessible and well organised.
Definition	RO to provide a narrative account of the following aspects of polling station location and layout: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disability considerations under Scope/Capability Scotland/Disability Action guidelines • information/posters/signage provided for voters • appropriateness of layout (multi-stationed) • provision of materials in alternative formats as appropriate • detail on the process followed to carry out the polling station review and the criteria against which prospective polling places/stations are assessed

3.11 It is essential that polling stations are accessible and well-organised in order to provide the best possible voting experience to the public. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would include a narrative section(s) for the RO to provide information on issues such as polling station layout, adherence to Scope/Capability Scotland/Disability Action NI guidelines and the provision of information in the polling station. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5. The Commission would welcome further suggestions on other areas that it would be appropriate to include in this indicator.

Table 9: Indicator 8 – Count administration

Title	Count administration
Description	Examining the administration of counting, including the completeness and accuracy of count records.
Purpose/aim	To ensure that counting is well organised, transparent and properly documented.
Definition	The RO to confirm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all ballot boxes, when they arrive at the count, have fully completed and accurate paperwork attached and are ready for the verification process • the statement regarding postal ballot papers has been returned within the required timescales • number of counting staff employed

3.12 In order for the count to run efficiently the ballot boxes should have their paperwork completed accurately by the time they reach the count venue so that they are ready for verification. This indicator seeks confirmation from ROs that all ballot boxes are ready and the paperwork is complete and accurate. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 10: Indicator 9 – Number of recounts

Title	Number of recounts
Description	A measure of the number of recounts and reasons for them.
Purpose/aim	To provide specific contextual information in relation to indicator 8.
Definition	The RO to provide information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the number of recounts undertaken• who initiated the recount and the reasons for these recounts• whether the decision changed or confirmed the result of the relevant contest• how many recounts were refused and reasons for this refusal

3.13 There is very little data gathered on the amount of recounts undertaken and the reasons for them. The Commission would be interested to know if there is desire for this information to be collected, if any information relating to recounts could be used as a measure of performance and, if so, what would be the best method of doing so. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 11: Indicator 10 – Length of the count process

Title	Length of the count process
Description	The time taken for the result to be declared from the commencement of the count.
Purpose/aim	To ensure the count is completed without undue delay.
Definition	The RO to provide information on the time taken for all results to have been declared (measured from the start of the count process, rather than from close of poll).

3.14 The Commission is aware that there is concern among some participants in the electoral process that counts are not completed as quickly as they could be. While the Commission's priority remains an accurate count, we have taken the decision to consult on this indicator in order to assess the level of concern over the speed of counts. The Commission acknowledges that this indicator may be unpopular with some, and respondents are encouraged to comment on whether there would be a fair way of collecting this data given the varying nature and type of elections across the UK.

Table 12: Indicator 11 – Enhancing electoral integrity

Title	Enhancing electoral integrity
Description	Activity carried out by the RO to discourage and detect fraud during the electoral process.
Purpose/aim	To ensure a proactive approach is taken to the detection of potential electoral fraud during the election process.
Definition	The RO will be expected to demonstrate that (for example): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an assessment of risks to electoral integrity is undertaken in planning for the conduct of an election or referendum• liaison is undertaken with the local police force Single Point of Contact (SPOC) during an election/referendum

3.15 Enhancing electoral integrity is key priority for the Commission, and is the primary motivation for this indicator. The Commission anticipates this indicator involving narrative self-assessment against a list of key best practice activities, and we would welcome suggestions on the content of these best practice key points. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 13: Indicator 12 – Encouraging participation

Title	Encouraging participation
Description	Examining the activity undertaken by the RO to promote awareness of the election and accessibility of information relating to the nominations process.
Purpose/aim	To ensure the RO takes appropriate steps to promote awareness of elections (compliance under Section 69 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA) in Great Britain) and the nomination process.
Definition	The RO to provide narrative information on the method used to promote awareness of the election, including whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the RO/RCO raises general awareness of the election/referendum – advertising around the local authority area, through the website, information leaflets and engagement with local community groups• the RO/RCO has developed a publicity strategy including, for example, the use of the local media and/or council media to publicise the election/referendum and provide information to the public/candidates

3.16 The RO, under EAA, has a new duty to promote awareness of elections and encourage participation. This indicator seeks to discover the type and level of activity undertaken by the RO. This information will also build up a library of best practice that could be shared across the UK. The Commission anticipates that this indicator would follow a similar format to that outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Table 14: Indicator 13 – Participant satisfaction with the electoral process

Title	Participant satisfaction with the electoral process
Description	ROs are to outline the work they carry out in seeking participant satisfaction of the nomination, voting and count process.
Purpose/aim	To ensure the experiences of key users (candidates, agents and voters) are evaluated and taken into account. This indicator will provide information on the actions and processes which impact on the quality of the service experienced by users.
Definition	<p>The RO to provide a narrative account including information on (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • methods used to amend minor errors • number of valid/invalid nominations received at the most recent election • time allowed for nominations • length of nomination process – time period • details on the number and location of briefing sessions • details on any appointment system in place • details of the staff who process the nominations • whether the RO undertakes a customer satisfaction survey of the candidates and agents and whether the RO will be expected to list the results of the customer satisfaction survey (template provided by the Commission) • whether the RO undertakes a customer satisfaction survey of the electorate and whether the RO will be expected to list the results of the customer satisfaction survey (template provided by the Commission) or provide a description of the process to record any complaints

3.29 This indicator focuses on the key end users of the electoral process – voters, candidates and agents. The Commission envisages that this indicator would involve narrative accounts of such activities as time allowed for nominations, details on briefing sessions for candidates and agents, and whether any survey is undertaken of candidates/agents/electors. The Commission would be particularly interested in any suggestions as to further activities about which the RO could provide information.

Appendix A

Extract from the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

9A Setting of performance standards

- (1) The Commission may from time to time—
 - (a) determine standards of performance for relevant officers, and
 - (b) publish, in such form and in such manner as they consider appropriate, the standards so determined.
- (2) The standards of performance are such standards as the Commission think ought to be achieved by—
 - (a) electoral registration officers in the performance of their functions;
 - (b) returning officers in the administration of the elections specified in subsection
 - (c) counting officers in the administration of the referendums specified in subsection (7).
- (3) Before determining standards under subsection (1), the Commission must consult—
 - (a) the Secretary of State, and
 - (b) any other person they think appropriate.
- (4) The Commission may determine different standards for different descriptions of relevant officers.
- (5) When the Commission publishes standards under subsection (1) they must send a copy of the published standards to the Secretary of State who must lay a copy of the published standards before each House of Parliament.
- (6) The elections specified in this subsection are—
 - (a) an election mentioned in section 5(2);
 - (b) a parliamentary by-election;
 - (c) an election under section 9 of the Scotland Act 1998 (constituency vacancies);
 - (d) an election under section 8 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 (vacancies in constituency seats);
 - (e) a local government election in England or Wales.
- (7) The referendums specified in this subsection are—
 - (a) a referendum to which Part 7 applies;
 - (b) a referendum under Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- (8) For the purposes of this section and sections 9B and 9C, the relevant officers are—
 - (a) electoral registration officers;
 - (b) in relation to elections within subsection (6), returning officers;

- (c) in relation to referendums within subsection (7), counting officers.

9B Returns and reports on performance standards

- (1) The Commission may from time to time issue directions to relevant officers to provide the Commission with such reports regarding their level of performance against the standards determined under section 9A(1) as may be specified in the direction.
- (2) A direction under subsection (1)–
 - (a) must specify the relevant officer or officers to whom it is issued (and may specify a description or descriptions of relevant officers),
 - (b) may require the report or reports to relate to such elections or referendums (or both) as may be specified in the direction, and
 - (c) may require the report or reports to be provided in a form specified in the direction.
- (3) A report provided to the Commission in pursuance of subsection (1) may be published by the relevant officer to whom it relates.
- (4) The Commission shall from time to time prepare and publish (in such manner as the Commission may determine) assessments of the level of performance by relevant officers against the standards determined under section 9A(1).
- (5) An assessment under subsection (4)–
 - (a) must specify the relevant officer or officers to whom it relates;
 - (b) must specify the period to which it relates;
 - (c) may specify the elections or referendums (or both) to which it relates.
- (6) The Commission must not prepare an assessment under subsection (4) unless they have received reports in pursuance of subsection (1) from the relevant officer or officers for the matters to which the assessment relates.
- (7) Before publishing an assessment under subsection (4), the Commission shall–
 - (a) provide to each relevant officer a copy of those parts of the assessment which relate to him;
 - (b) have regard to any comments made by him regarding the factual accuracy of the assessment.

9C Provision of information about expenditure on elections etc

- (1) The Commission may by notice in writing direct a relevant officer to provide the Commission with such expenditure information as may be specified in the direction.
- (2) Expenditure information is information relating to–
 - (a) in the case of an electoral registration officer, expenditure in connection with the performance of his functions;

- (b) in the case of a returning officer, expenditure in connection with the election or elections specified in section 9A(6) for which he is appointed or otherwise holds office;
 - (c) in the case of a counting officer, expenditure in connection with the referendum or referendums specified in section 9A(7) for which he is appointed.
- (3) A direction under subsection (1)–
- (a) may require the information to relate to such elections or (as the case may be) referendums as may be specified in the direction;
 - (b) may require the information to be provided in a form specified in the direction;
 - (c) may specify the time within which the information must be provided.
- (4) This section does not affect any other power of the Commission to request information.

Appendix B

List of assessment criteria

- Q1 Does the indicator provide data which can be collected with ease?
- Q2 Does the indicator propose any additional electoral administrative activity which may present a new cost implication?
- Q3 Does the indicator measure performance that is within the existing legislative framework?
- Q4 Does the indicator measure as closely as possible the result it is intended to measure?
- Q5 Is the indicator objective without ambiguity about what is being measured?
- Q6 Is there a potential for disaggregating the data where appropriate (e.g. at ward level or by differing demographic groups)?
- Q7 Does the indicator measure data that can be obtained in a timely way and at a reasonable cost (i.e. following an electoral process and without significant cost compared to the value of the actual data received)?
- Q8 Will the indicator provide data of sufficiently reliable quality for analysis?
- Q9 Will the indicator produce data which will provide a basis for comparative analysis?
- Q10 Are there any additional assessment criteria which the Electoral Commission could use to assess potential election indicators?
- Q11 Is the range of election indicators appropriate or applicable for the whole UK electoral community?
- Q12 Do you agree that the election performance indicators, taken as a group, will adequately measure all the relevant aspects of the electoral administrative process?
- Q13 Looking at the overall group of indicators, is the mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators appropriate?
- Q14 Are there any additional qualitative or quantitative election indicators which you would like the Commission to consider?
- Q15 What support would Returning Officers require to (a) capture and report this data in a timely fashion and (b) develop and implement improvement plans?