

**Review of the Verification and Count Arrangements for Croydon Council Elections  
May 2022**

**Prepared for the Croydon Borough Council Returning Officer**

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**May 2023**

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## 1 Introduction & Conclusions

- 1.1 This report, commissioned by Croydon Council's Returning Officer Katherine Kerswell, independently reviews the arrangements made for the verification and count of the votes cast for Croydon Councils Borough Wards and Executive Mayor following the polls held on Thursday 5 May 2022
- 1.2 Following a referendum held on the 7 October 2021 scheduled polls held on Thursday 5 May 2022 to determine the election of 70 Borough Ward Councillors for the 28 Borough Wards were combined with the first election of an Executive Mayor.
- 1.3 The verification and counts were held at Trinity School, Shirley Park from Thursday evening on 5 May 2022 through to Sunday 8 May 2022 exceeding timeline expectations and coupled with adverse comments from some stakeholders and local social media, resulted in the Returning Officer's decision to undertake this review.
- 1.4 It is hoped that this report will enable the Returning Officer, the senior staff employed to work on elections and the elections team, to learn from the experience of running the last election and to reflect on the resource arrangements, the effectiveness of the processes and policies in place to deliver transparent and secure elections in the future.
- 1.5 Mark Heath Returning Officer at Southampton and SOLACE Elections Spokesperson and Robert Curtis, Head of Electoral Services at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and ex Chair of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) were asked to undertake the review on behalf of the Returning Officer guided by agreed Terms of Reference.
- 1.6 The outcome of the verification and count of the votes cast for the 2022 borough wards and Executive Mayor was transparent, safe and secure.
- 1.7 Those Terms of Reference are attached at **Appendix A**
- 1.8 Stakeholders were approached for their observations along with those responsible for project planning and for the delivery of the polls.
- 1.9 5 representatives from political parties with candidates at the polls engaged with the review team interviewed via Teams.
  - (a) Conservatives x 1
  - (b) Labour x 2
  - (c) Liberal Democrats x 2
- 1.10 Written representations via email were received from 2 members of the Green Party
- 1.11 Interviews via Teams or in person were conducted with:
  - (a) an Independent Election Agent.
  - (b) an Independent Mayor Candidate.
  - (c) 3 Directors from Croydon Council.

- (d) the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.
- (e) 3 other Officers from Croydon Council involved in the election.
- (f) 6 staff members of the electoral services team; and
- (g) 3 count supervisors from outside Croydon

- 1.12 We also interviewed and discussed the issues and draft report with the Returning Officer.
- 1.13 As the person ultimately responsible for the conduct of elections, the RO decided to recuse herself from the commissioning role. As a result, we liaised with Elaine Jackson (from Croydon Council) and Alison Griffin (Chief Executive of London Councils) who took on the commissioning role from that point.
- 1.14 Most interviews were undertaken via Microsoft Teams and ranged from 30 minutes with staff undertaking specific roles to over 2 ½ hours with those representing the political parties.
- 1.15 Two personal visits were also made to the Croydon Council offices to undertake interviews face to face with the electoral services team and Senior Croydon Council Officers.
- 1.16 Audio recordings of interviews were not made. However, in all cases written records of interviews were made. Where appropriate, we held additional interviews to clarify comments or information received.
- 1.17 For the avoidance of doubt, nothing within this report amounts to the making of a finding or findings in respect of any formal processes which relate to employees of the Authority, nor to any finding of legal liability or culpability.
- 1.18 We have used our judgement and experience to reach the conclusions and recommendations in this report, based on the evidence we have collected and the perceptions of the witnesses we have interviewed. Where accounts conflicted about a particular event we have, of necessity, relied on our own judgement and experience to reach a particular conclusion where one was required.
- 1.19 Prior to publication, we sent a copy of this report to the Returning Officer in confidence, to sense check and check for factual inaccuracies in our draft report.
- 1.20 We should also make it clear that there is a significant benefit in looking at such matters in the cold light of day and with the benefit of hindsight, both of which we did have and the key players did not.
- 1.21 We should also make it clear that few if any elections run without issues. Running an election brings with it significant risks, there is heavy reliance on people suppliers and systems, all of which can make mistakes / fail. The legislative regime which the RO must follow is chronically in need of consolidation and updating. The nature of an electoral process brings by its very nature a range of tensions and issues.
- 1.22 The ultimate goal for any Returning Officer and their team is that the outcome of the verification and count of the votes cast is transparent, accurate, safe and secure. This was the outcome for the 2022 elections at Croydon Council.
- 1.23 The Returning Officer, her core team, and those appointed as count supervisors and assistants delivered.

- (a) an accurate verification.
- (b) an accurate Mayoral count.
- (c) 28 accurate Borough Ward Counts.
- (d) no potential candidate was denied the right to stand.
- (e) no voter was disenfranchised; and
- (f) the results declared reflected the will of the electorate and the elections were conducted in an apolitical manner.

- 1.24 The above are (in summary) the key duties that the legislation place upon the Returning Officer.
- 1.25 Nothing we have found should detract from this as this reflects the overriding obligations placed upon the Returning Officer and her team in terms of running the election.
- 1.26 Croydon have also held two council by elections since without incident and complaint.
- 1.27 However, criticism has been aimed at the Returning Officer for the way the verification and counts were held. The allegations cited poor leadership, inadequate delegation, slow decision making, resources not utilised correctly and inadequate communication in the venue.
- 1.28 The criticism is in our view, to a limited extent, justified with those attending the venues subject to delays getting into the venue, long periods of inactivity in the halls and the mayoral count result extending beyond the predicted 10pm. This was inconvenient and frustrating not only for those waiting for the Mayoral result but those attending the Borough Ward Counts.
- 1.29 However, the variables at play in any election count may result in delays beyond expected times. Few ROs ever commit to any deadlines, as they cannot control them. Close counts requiring multiple recounts, security issues or unforeseeable medical emergencies to name but three are examples of circumstances that the review team have experienced that have thrown possible timeframes out of kilter.
- 1.30 The delays were undoubtedly frustrating and there were matters that could have been handled better in respect of that BUT the duty of the Returning Officer to run the election in accordance with the law and implement the will of the people was fulfilled.
- 1.31 We also found no evidence of any breach or failure to comply with any legislative requirement by the Returning Officer and her team.
- 1.32 There were no legal challenges to the election result (and had there been we can see no basis for them being successful).
- 1.33 The election was conducted lawfully, and democracy properly implemented. It was also transparent, accurate, safe and secure.
- 1.34 We were also very aware that the Returning Officer as CEO of the Council was coping with a multiplicity of significant and highly challenging issues at the Council, and under considerable pressure both in terms of workload, the significance of

that, and consequential pressures on her time.

- 1.35 Historically, Croydon's elections are often close, have been subject to lengthy but accurate counts, held in competitive environments and these polls were no exception.
- 1.36 Croydon had the most ballot papers to count, 27,387 more than Tower Hamlets who were the second highest in London with comparative polls held and 81,975 more than Hackney.
- 1.37 The Croydon Mayor result after the first preference count showed a difference of 2,061 between the top two candidates. The final result after the second preference count, was a difference of only 589 so it was extremely close.
- 1.38 By way of comparison Tower Hamlets, the only other London Borough to go to a second preference count, had a difference of 11,639 after the first preference, so a significant margin and a difference of 7,317 between the candidates when the final result was known. No recounts or assurance checks were required or undertaken with the results accepted by all present.
- 1.39 The difference of only 589 for the Mayor poll undoubtedly added additional pressure on the Returning Officer and her core management team but the insistence on accuracy, albeit resulting in lengthy assurance delays, was in our opinion the correct methodology to adopt and the lack of legal challenge endorses the action taken.
- 1.40 However, final results and quality assurances aside, there were aspects of the organisation that should and could have been done better, and the number of recommendations reflect our observations in that respect.

## **2. The Role of the Returning Officer**

- 2.1 Katherine Kerswell is the Returning Officer (RO) for local elections held in Croydon and is the Council's Chief Executive Officer.
- 2.2 The Representation of the People Act 1983 Section 35 requires the council to appoint an officer of the council to be the RO in local elections.
- 2.3 For a London Borough the RO is the proper officer of the borough appointed for a particular purpose of that local authority (Sec 270(3) LGA 1972).
- 2.4 The duties as RO are separate from those as a local government officer. The RO is not responsible to the council but directly and personally accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder.
- 2.5 While the RO can appoint one or more persons to discharge any or all her functions, she cannot delegate the personal responsibility for delivering the election <sup>(1)</sup> However, the RO will have a team of staff supporting and assisting her, working to her direction to deliver the poll. Many of the day-to-day functions will be discharged by that team.
- 2.6 It is the RO's duty at elections to do all such acts and things as may be necessary for effectively conducting the election for example:
  - (a) the nomination process for candidates and political parties.
  - (b) provision, administration, security, and notification of polling stations.

- (c) appointment of staff such as presiding officers and count staff.
- (d) preparation and issue of all ballot papers; issue, receipt and counting of postal ballot papers.
- (e) organising and delivering the count and declaration of results.
- (f) receipt of all candidates' election expenses returns.
- (g) presentation of final accounts and claiming appropriate funding from central government as prescribed; and
- (h) the retention of election documents.

### **3. The Electoral Services Team**

3.1 The electoral services team has 5 permanent positions and 2 temporary officers, namely:

- (a) Head of Electoral Services and Mayors Office.
- (b) Deputy Electoral Services Manager.
- (c) 3 permanent electoral services officers' (one member of staff off long-term sick at the time of the 2022 elections)
- (d) 2 Temporary members of staff

3.1 This set up is not fundamentally different to other London authorities, who admittedly face different challenges, but of the 7 officers, two hold the Association of Electoral Administrators Certificate, one is studying for that qualification and the rest do not hold any relevant electoral services qualifications.

3.2 A comparison with Tower Hamlets which has eight full time staff working in Electoral Services dedicated to electoral duties only, all of whom hold the AEA Certificate or higher, puts the resources, structure, and qualifications of the team into perspective.

3.3 On 6 July 2021 the Head of Electoral Services was informed formally, following a decision by Full Council on the 5 July 2021, that his role as the Head of Electoral Services and Mayors Office would be directly assimilated/matched to the post of Head of Mayors Office, Elections, and Coroners Services, adding the role of Coroners Services to his existing role.

3.4 The Head of Service did not appeal this decision but when informed he contacted his line managers via email to express his concern that the imposition of this additional responsibility was ill advised particularly with the potential of combined polls that could occur in May 2022.

3.5 This cautionary email appears not to have been heeded, and his post was amended with the additional duties.

3.6 The imposition of this additional role at such a crucial time is considered ill-advised and with the Coroners Service needing significant work to address issues in that set up, this amounted to additional responsibilities for the Head of Service at a time when preparations for the Governance Referendum in October were starting to escalate and, subject to the result of the Referendum, the immediate

preparations for the combined polls in May 2022.

- 3.7 It is not surprising that in a short period of time, within a few months, a consultant was brought in to alleviate the Coroners Service workload resulting in a full-time post being created and recruited to.
- 3.8 Two full time staff electoral services team staff were also unavailable in the lead up to polling day with one member on long term sick and another member retiring in January 2022.
- 3.9 Two comparatively inexperienced temporary staff were brought in to assist the team but the loss of two full time experienced officers in the immediate approach to the polls in May was unfortunate and should have been subject to an immediate review.
- 3.10 Whilst the immediate Electoral Services Team were responsible for the immediate administration of the polls and the compilation of the electoral register, which underpinned the data requirements for the Returning Officer, the support and responsibilities also included the appointment of five Deputy Returning Officers, three with specific powers, though these specific responsibilities are not detailed in the appointments, and two with full powers. Copies of the formal written appointments of these deputies have been provided to the review.
- 3.11 The then Director of Commercial Investment & Capital was not formally appointed in writing as a Deputy Returning Officer but was delegated positions of responsibility notably the receipt of the ballot boxes and the preparation and organisation of the reception area

#### **4 Core Working Project Group**

- 4.1 The Electoral Commissions advice to Returning Officers is extensive and comprehensively details the management responsibilities attached to the role (2)
- 4.2 Formal project planning and risk assessment management is essential for the successful running of elections and no more so than for combined Borough Ward elections and an Executive Mayor poll being held for the first time in Croydon.
- 4.3 All the staff interviewed, without exception, accepted the importance of a project management approach to the polls and there was an expectation of appropriate planning being in place by those political representatives interviewed who would be directly affected.
- 4.4 Initially, the project planning was as expected with a core team consisting of the Head of Service, Deputy Electoral Services Manager and the Director of Policy, Programmes & Performance, meeting to identify the challenges and significant implications of the combined polls.
- 4.5 Not unusually the Head of Service had also compiled a spreadsheet that listed the tasks and actions points that would need to be addressed from the beginning of January through to the cessation of the various counts, at this stage scheduled for the Thursday and Friday.
- 4.6 This spreadsheet was frequently referred to by the electoral services team and used to ensure that tasks were understood and delegated to the right people, but updates added to the sheets merely referred to tasks being completed with no specific detail and dates inaccurately referenced.



- 4.7 As would be expected the initial planning meetings were held with the core team and minutes drafted and action points agreed.
- 4.8 The first meeting was held on 17 December 2021 followed by a further two meetings on 14 January 2022 and 27 January 2022.
- 4.9 At these initial three meetings minutes were taken and action points agreed.
- 4.10 However, following the meeting on the 27 January 2022 the formal recording of the content ended when the member of staff who had been delegated to take the minutes moved department within the Council. From that point onwards formal minutes were not taken at meetings held with sole reliance on emails and personal meetings. The Returning Officer told us she was not aware of this and had she been she would have addressed this.
- 4.11 The cessation of formal structured agendas distributed prior to scheduled meetings with stakeholders then able to prepare in advance and the taking of minutes to ensure that the preplanning was recorded in detail is the one area that should have been escalated and resolved from the moment the minute taker moved to another department.
- 4.12 In interview the reason why no minutes were taken after 27 January 2022 was given as a lack of resource but with universal acceptance that detailed recorded project planning is central to the success of delivery this should have been addressed from the very outset and insisted on, but this was not the case.
- 4.13 No minutes, no formal recording of decisions and no formal referrals to action points that needed to be completed within certain timescales is not conducive with the principles of project planning. Had this been continued and the content agreed with all stakeholders, areas of concern may have been identified early, those with delegated responsibilities accountable and open to scrutiny to ensure the requirements of them were understood, in place and then signed off as polling day and the count approached. But this was not the case for these polls.
- 4.14 It was also evident in interview that those charged with responsibility to ensure the project planning was in place, who very clearly expressed their previous experiences in managing other unrelated projects, did not formally challenge the lack of detailed plans with deadlines and accountability that everyone had to adhere to, including themselves.
- 4.15 It should be noted that this lack of formality does not indicate that the electoral services team were not aware of the tasks that needed to be completed and discussions held with the Returning Officer albeit not formally recorded.
- 4.16 Evidence has been provided by the Head of Service and Deputy Electoral Services Manager of lists of tasks to complete from the beginning of the year through to the verification and count, but they agreed that whilst these were referred to, they were not updated and monitored as would be expected and they relied on their experience and knowledge of when tasks needed to be completed as the statutory timetable progressed.
- 4.17 Calculations have also been provided for:
- (a) potential turnouts affecting the Borough Ward polls, the Mayor 1st preference vote and potential 2nd preference vote.
  - (b) grass skirt allocations for the count teams; and

- (c) the number of ballot papers each count assistant would need to count over a given period.
- 4.18 This lack of formal project planning, detailed sign off and close examination of the planning in place also extended to the arrangements for the verification and count. The implications and repercussions of this will be detailed in that section.
- 4.19 One area that was repeatedly raised in the interviews was the restricted time allocated with the Returning Officer. This was considered inadequate and didn't allow for comprehensive assessment of where the team was and what needed to be completed. The Returning Officer does not recall this being an issue or raised with her. Confirmation has been received that an email was sent by the Assistant Chief Executive Officer on 23 March 2022 to the Executive Officer to the Chief Executive asking for the meetings to be changed from 30 minutes to an hour because "at least 3 items to be discussed were missed". A response was received from the Executive Support Officer to the Director of Policy, Programmes and Performance on the same day confirming that the meetings are arranged through the director's diary, that the timings would be amended, and a request agreed by return from the ACEO that the meetings be changed from biweekly to weekly.
- 4.20 Returning Officers are invariably Senior officers of the council and are often the Chief Executive but not always and it is acknowledged that this places significant pressures on their time. The backstory at Croydon is a matter of record so the issues the Chief Executive had to address alongside preparing for these polls at this time cannot be underestimated. But certain issues scheduled for discussion were not dealt with in a timely fashion, though the Returning Officer / staff have different recollections whether this was raised.
- 4.21 Whatever the priorities and issues at the Council, the electoral timetable is unrelenting, prescriptive and affords no discretion to the RO and their team in terms of delivery deadlines. Given these timetable pressures the escalation procedures for whatever reason did not work well.
- 4.22 The late decision on the Count venue should have been decided earlier as that would have allowed better preparation. Whilst the choice of venue did not alter from that used since 2018, the decision was not made until 1 March 2022.

## **5 The Count Venue**

- 5.1 Trinity School has been an established count venue used at the 2018 local elections, 2019 European Parliamentary, 2019 Extraordinary General Election and the Governance Referendum held on 7 October 2021.
- 5.2 Due to concerns expressed by stakeholders about the use of Trinity, three venues were mooted for the count in May 2022. Crystal Palace, Fairfield Halls and Trinity School.
- 5.3 All three venues are well known to the political parties and there were pro's and con's expressed in interviews as to each venues suitability, with opinions split as to the suitability of Trinity School but general acceptance that it had been used on previous occasions without incident.
- 5.4 There was confusion from some of the political parties as to the availability of Fairfield Halls which were confirmed as unavailable as early as May 2021 when enquiries by the Head of Service were initially made, but this was not known by the

majority of those interviewed.

- 5.5 Crystal Palace is located just outside of the borough, and this meant that Trinity School, having been used for the Governance Referendum in October 2021 just 6 months before was chosen as the preferred venue.
- 5.6 However, formal confirmation to use Trinity School was not made by the Returning Officer until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 only two months before polling day.
- 5.7 The Returning Officer explained that the site had been used many times before so was known to the elections team who had plans and experience for its use as a count venue.
- 5.8 A detailed plan for the Count if it was to be held at Trinity was produced at the first election planning on 7 January 2022. It did not change much after this, but the other options, specifically Crystal Palace needed to be evaluated. After the second meeting at the end of January the RO commissioned an options appraisal. The group leaders were split over the choice of venue and the RO decided to make a site visit and evaluate both. This occurred in February.
- 5.9 The elections team told us that late confirmation of the venue presented difficulties to them as they could not undertake tasks that would ordinarily be completed many months before polling day. Polling and count staff appointments were delayed, and a detailed count plan also delayed at a time when the elections team had to deal with nominations, staffing and a plethora of electoral registration and election tasks close to polling day.
- 5.10 A member of the team said, *"I don't think the administrative problems it caused was really understood by senior management"*.
- 5.11 The Returning Officer told us that she would have had more concern had the venue not been used before and from the detailed plan she saw in January at the first planning meeting it was clear the staff were familiar with the venue. She did accept that with hindsight January was too late to start the process but did not feel once started she had delayed it. She has since endeavoured to have venue decisions made earlier in the timetable but the work to deliver that has not been completed in a timely fashion by the team. However, she does not accept that this directly caused the problems as stated. No issues were escalated to her, no concerns were raised in relation to this, assurances were given to her that things were fine and previous polls had been run well at the venue. The count plan for Trinity had been developed in January and did not alter. The issues flagged as a problem by the elections team are not venue reliant between the venue choices being considered—such as the number of polling staff and count staff to be appointed.
- 5.12 The count plan itself was drafted by the Head of Service but wasn't broken down into the finite detail required for a combined poll being held over what was initially expected to be two days, particularly the reception of attendees at the venue and what contingencies would be if deadlines were not met. The reception part of the plan was never finished.
- 5.13 Communication with the school is acknowledged as very good, the team having dealt with them on previous occasions and site visits were arranged attended by the Returning Officer and the core elections team.
- 5.14 However, no formal contract was agreed and signed with the school. This was not something the Returning Officer was aware of.
- 5.15 This could have been problematic particularly when the extra days were required at

the last minute and not having specific requirements also impinged on certain areas of the verification and count. An example of this was the swimming pool being open at the same time as the count resulting in members of the public gaining access into the venue. It is noted that access into the counting halls was regulated by security but public access into the car park and through reception did occur. Having a detailed contract subject to scrutiny and drafted to ensure that the content is agreed and suits the requirements of the Returning Officer is a mainstay of project planning. Senior management were unaware that a formal contract had not been agreed and as such what was agreed, what the school could be beholden to and placed the Returning Officer in a precarious position.

- 5.16 This was accepted in interview by one of the core project team and highlights the lack of formality in the planning and decision making.

## **6 The Verification – Thursday 5 May 2022 (10PM)**

- 6.1 The verification of ballot boxes receipted from the polling stations took place immediately after the close of polls at 10pm.
- 6.2 The reception of the boxes is a significant task with the facilities team responsible for the receipt at the count venue.
- 6.3 This process appears to have been well managed but there was an incident of a political representative manhandling boxes as they arrived to try and ascertain how full the boxes were.
- 6.4 A senior officer charged with the receipt of boxes explained that certain agents and candidates were pushing the boundaries and testing how far they could get away with things that should not have been permitted and this made everything tense and intimidating.
- 6.5 The reception of staff, candidates and agents, guests, and the media to observe the verification was not organised as was to be expected.
- 6.6 Candidates/agents arriving to observe the verification were subjected to unacceptable delays as they arrived at the venue.
- 6.7 An election agent who had pre-arranged a disabled car parking space, was met by Marshalls who had no idea of the arrangement in place, and she was forced to park a distance away from the reception area.
- 6.8 There were also long queues forming with some official observers missing the commencement of the verification at 10PM some waiting over an hour to get into the venue.
- 6.9 Interviews confirmed the following:
- (a) lists of attendees were inaccurate.
  - (b) some attendees were not on the lists at all and had to have their names added.
  - (c) some lanyards had to be handwritten at the time for those not on the lists.
  - (d) lanyards and wrist bands were not prepared and there was confusion as to which wrist bands attendees were entitled to.

- (e) the reception/gazebos had not been set up by 8pm.
  - (f) there was no filtering of staff/candidates/agents.
  - (g) no recording of who then left the venue after being granted access; and
  - (h) staff were also required to bring photographic evidence to satisfy the requirement of employees being able to work in the UK. This is not the normal approach adopted elsewhere as not having completed this task prior to the verification added to the delays.
- 6.10 Some of these incidents e.g. attendees seeking admission not on lists happens at other counts but the cumulative nature of the incidents and the lack of planning anticipating such issues / contingencies elevated it above the "norm".
- 6.10.1 No specific plan existed for the reception, although the Deputy Electoral Services Manager had identified the need for this and produced evidence of the start of a document being produced but it was not completed.
- 6.11 If a comprehensive plan had been produced, as part of the overall preparations, this could have been scrutinised and signed off by those delegated to manage the reception area along with the core project group.
- 6.12 Attendee lists and equipment were made available early, but the initial reception was ill prepared and inadequate, resulting in justified dissatisfaction from attendees at the delays experienced.
- 6.13 Comments were made that the staff on reception were courteous, apologetic and were working very hard to address the issues including those appointed as DRO's and the RO who supported the team by helping clear the backlog but:
- (a) the reception was not prepared as it should have been.
  - (b) there were no specific deadlines for the reception to be in situ that had to be adhered to.
  - (c) there was a lack of urgency with the set up still taking place at 8.30pm when people were starting to arrive.
  - (d) there was no direct accountability of ensuring the preparation was in place;
  - (e) one senior manager explained that the objective was to set up by 8.30pm but this was clearly at the last minute, and they were simply overwhelmed.
- 6.14 Once inside the venue the verification had been set up into 3 halls with the boxes allocated to individual wards with the postal ballot boxes from the opening sessions held prior to polling day opened first.
- 6.15 Some of the official scrutineers could not access the venue in time for the commencement of the verification but there were several people in the hall when the verification commenced and consequently, the ballot boxes were subject to the necessary and appropriate critical scrutiny. This was an appropriate lawful and transparent process albeit that some were unable to access the venue on time. It should also be noted that:
- (a) boxes were shown by supervisors to be empty when opened.
  - (b) a variance tolerance, set by the Returning Officer was set at zero ensuring

accurate results; and

- (c) the content of each box was checked by the count teams and supervisors and the top tables informed of the results before being accepted.
- 6.16 An additional task at the verification was the opening of postal packs handed into the polling stations on polling day and those delivered by Royal Mail to the venue following their conduct of a sweep of the local sorting offices.
- 6.17 The sweep is an additional paid service where Royal Mail undertake a “sweep” of sorting offices on the evening of polling day, and they then deliver any postal vote return envelopes to the Returning Officer before the close of poll so that they can be included in the count.
- 6.18 The sweep is not mandatory and the decision to undertake the sweep by the Returning Officer ensured that packs not delivered prior to polling day and held in the Royal Mail system were received and included in the count, this is good practice.
- 6.19 Postal vote packs handed into the polling stations and brought to the count by Presiding Officers was 574 and 547 from Royal Mail so 1,121 in total.
- 6.20 Whilst the process of opening postal votes has not been subject to any comment from the candidates/parties, the Returning Officer told us that it was slow, and this delayed the count and results. The time taken to complete it show that it was conducted efficiently and correctly.
- 6.21 1,121 is a comparable figure with Tower Hamlets receiving 919 postal packs following receipt at the polling stations and Royal Mail Sweep.
- 6.22 However, several political representatives stated that the Croydon counts are “always slow”, this phrase was used on several occasions, but also there was acknowledgement by the majority that accuracy should always be the primary objective and not speed.
- 6.23 To compare how Croydon fared, data on verifications held was collated from Electoral Services Managers and Heads of Service from Lewisham, Hackney, Croydon, Tower Hamlets, and Newham these authorities in London who held local elections combined with the election of a Mayor on the same day.
- 6.24 This data can be viewed at **Appendix B** and shows an average of 4 hours 34 minutes for the combined verifications with Croydon 56 minutes over the average and Lewisham an hour and 34 minutes below the average.
- 6.25 Whilst Croydon were 56 minutes over the average, they took the same time as Newham and close to the time taken by Tower Hamlets (40 minutes difference).
- 6.26 It should be noted that Croydon:
- (a) verified more papers than any other authority (28.48% over the average);
  - (b) verified 70,105 more ballot papers than the lowest number of papers verified by another authority namely Hackney.
  - (c) completed the verification in the same time timescale as Newham but verified 65,363 more papers; and

- (d) took 40 minutes longer than Tower Hamlets but counted 22,381 papers more.

Authority	Time over/under average	Papers	% of papers under/above average
Croydon	0:56	194,244	28.48%
Hackney	-0:34	124,139	-17.89%
Lewisham	-1:34	136,824	-9.50%
Newham	0:56	128,881	-14.76%
Tower Hamlets	0:16	171,863	13.67%
		151,190	

- 6.27 On completion of the verification, the totals were announced and the law states that the Returning Officer shall draw up a statement as to the detail of the verification, which any election agent may copy.
- 6.28 Examples of the Statements of Verification for the Mayor and the Borough Wards have been provided to the review which were published the day after the verification was concluded and show the variances and numbers accepted.
- 6.29 These documents were not readily known to the agents and representatives interviewed and some could not recollect if they had been provided with the breakdowns.
- 6.30 Examples can be seen at **Appendix C**
- 6.31 The time taken to verify was in our view not unreasonable or a matter for legitimate complaint.

## 7 The Mayoral Count – Friday 6th May 2022

- 7.1 Following the issues at the reception at the verification the entry into the venue was more structured and organised than the previous day but not ideal.
- 7.2 This was helped by most of those attending having already been issued with their lanyards and wrist bands and the arrangements already in situ. In addition, the reception staff had had the opportunity to amend and restructure the attendance lists and arrange the wrist bands so that they could be more easily distributed.
- 7.3 The structure of the Mayoral Count was again by Borough Ward, this a traditional method utilised by Croydon at previous elections and favoured by most political representatives.
- 7.4 There are 28 Borough Wards in Croydon, and this meant that there were 28 “mini counts” with each of these counts allocated the ballot papers already verified for each ward.
- 7.5 The count was spread across 3 halls with Deputy Returning Officers and

Supervisors allocated to each hall to ensure structured management and so that spoiled ballot papers could be adjudicated as the count progressed.

- 7.6 Expectation was that the Mayoral Count would take no longer than 4 hours and evidence of calculations based on the number of counters and the number of ballot papers to count dependent on turnout was provided as part of this review.
- 7.7 This was the first Mayoral count held in Croydon with the expected times for the 1st preference ballot calculated and the 2nd preference based on set percentage turnout figures.
- 7.8 The calculation of the anticipated turn out figures is detailed in **Appendix D**
- 7.9 When compared to the actual turnout and the number of ballot papers that counters managed to deal with, the estimated figures were not helped by recounts and/or bundle checks when figures did not match those expected at the top tables.
- 7.10 Observers were unaware that the tolerance set by the Returning Officer was zero and some explained that they were confused why results from the teams were going to the top tables and then returned for teams to recount without knowing why and by how much figures were out by (though this information in terms of the numbers "out" would not be expected to be shared, the process and rationale could have been).
- 7.11 The rationale to adopt a zero tolerance to ensure accurate results is the prerogative of the Returning Officer and is not unusual. Insisting on accurate returns reduces the likelihood of results being declared incorrectly and subsequently challenged through the courts. The decision by the RO was based on the knowledge of historically close polls in the past, the first Mayoral poll being held in Croydon and a 50% turnout scenario. The implications of a more relaxed approach and results adversely affected were discussed by the core team who all agreed to the necessity for accuracy and a zero tolerance approach.. We consider this was a sound decision by the RO and represented good practice.
- 7.12 Unfortunately, on numerous occasions across the 28 wards the counting of the first preference votes proved inaccurate, some to a greater and lesser degree, and this resulted in the supervisors returning to their count teams to recount the ballot papers allocated.
- 7.13 Having 28 different points of failure with a zero-tolerance meant that some teams balanced earlier than others with the overall completion of the 1st preference dependent on the final team to finish.
- 7.14 Variances as low as one or two were told to recount with supervisors and their teams not informed initially of the number that they were out, and some found this frustrating.
- 7.15 The Returning Officer also explained that the performance of the IT was a significant issue but this was successfully resolved by implementing a manual process that addressed the issues that had been identified.
- 7.16 The adjudication of doubtful ballot papers across 3 halls was difficult for observers to check for consistency and where this was not the case this was raised with the Returning Officer by the counting agents and examples revisited to ensure that a consistent approach was maintained. The Returning Officer also explained that there was a particular issue with doubtfuls being adjudicated by count staff rather than DROs. As a result of which a large number of papers needed re-adjudication and this had a direct impact delaying the count.



- 7.17 It soon became apparent that the 4 hours initially predicted for the Mayoral Count to conclude was not going to be met.
- 7.18 The consequences of the delayed result started to escalate when those attending the venue for the Borough Ward Counts starting to attend the venue prior to 10pm with expectation that the Borough Ward Counts would, as had been predicted, be commencing at that time.
- 7.19 Without a plan in place for this scenario the reception team allowed those who arrived for the Borough Ward Counts only to enter the venue placing the reception team and security under huge pressure to the point that people were simply being allowed into the venue. In view of the issues on the Mayoral Count, when the Borough only attendees came to the venue they should have been told that they could not enter but a significant number across the board were let in. Comments were made that the security and enforcement of who was and who should not have been in the venue was non-existent.
- 7.20 This highlighted the limitations of the project plan but also the implications of a predicted result by 10pm not being met given this was a count that had never been undertaken before.
- 7.21 The delay was now impinging on the mood of those who were in the venue expecting a Mayoral result and those attending expecting the Borough Ward Counts to be commencing.
- 7.22 A recount of the 1st preference votes added to the time but the decision to do this was the prerogative of the Returning Officer and, irrespective of the time it was taking, she was perfectly entitled to instruct this to satisfy herself that the ballots counted at this stage were accurate. The final margin of the outcome shows this to have been an appropriate judgement to make at that time. This was good practice.
- 7.23 No request was made by the political parties or candidates on receipt of the figures produced for the 1st preference to be recounted this a decision made by the Returning Officer of her own volition.
- 7.24 Once the recount was concluded the 1st preference result was shared with the political parties and candidates and confirmation given that the count would now proceed to the 2nd preference stage.
- 7.25 To draw comparison with the other 5 authorities counting 1st preference votes the figures are as follows.

	1st preference	Valid Ballot papers	Processed per minute
Croydon	7:20 hours	97,458	221
Hackney	4:00 hours	62,043	259
Lewisham	2:45 hours	68,847	417
Newham	2:30 hours	63,487	423
Tower Hamlets	4:00 hours	86,009	358

- 7.26 Again, Croydon counted the most ballot papers, but the ballots processed per minute were the lowest of the 5.
- 7.27 It should be noted that most staff had now worked through the night on the Thursday evening until the early hours on the Friday and were now faced with the Mayoral Count extending into the early hours of Friday night/Saturday morning.
- 7.28 Without exception all the staff interviewed confirmed that the extended count with a 1st preference recount as well as the number of doubtfuls was physically demanding and that two days working into the early hours affected concentration levels with accuracy affected because of sheer exhaustion.

## 8 2nd Preference Count

	2nd preference	Valid Ballot papers	Processed per minute
Croydon	3:45 hours	11,870	53
Tower Hamlets	1:00 hour	6,864	114

- 8.1 Only two authorities went to 2nd preference, Croydon, and Tower Hamlets.
- 8.2 Croydon had 11,870 ballot papers to deal with compared to Tower Hamlets 6,864.
- 8.3 Tower Hamlets second preference vote was anticipated following previous counts held and was not subject to any recounts or bundle checks. This was not the case with Croydon who were faced with a close result and a reassurance recount of the second preference votes undertaken at the behest of the Returning Officer.
- 8.4 Tower Hamlets also verified their ballot papers on the Friday morning and then counted the Mayoral ballots in the afternoon with everyone given one hours rest at midday before starting the Mayoral count so early AM counting did not apply.
- 8.5 The second preference vote at Tower Hamlets only took an hour but caution should be applied with this comparison with the result expected to go to a 2nd preference from the very outset and preparations made throughout the 1st preference stages to get ready for this part of the count.
- 8.6 Croydon's result was also comparatively close so the Returning Officer's insistence on accuracy and the checking of returns made was carefully considered and when the 2nd preference figures were known the Returning Officer directed that a recount be undertaken.
- 8.7 This again was the prerogative of the Returning Officer ensuring that the result was accurate and the opportunity for challenge reduced. We consider that this was good practice as one of the duties of the Returning Officer is to implement the will of electorate by giving effect to their vote. Accordingly checking that the result is correct, especially when it is close rather than offer a provisional result and wait for a request for a recount is good practice.
- 8.8 From the scrutineer's perspective this was perceived as a problem with repeated bundle checks and recounts and observation of stagnation in some areas of the count particularly where some of the Ward Counts had finished. This did cause

consternation because the observers could see resources not being utilised with staff not counting ballots in some areas but being counted in others.

- 8.9 Communication was maintained with the agents and candidates, but as time moved on frustration was expressed to the Returning Officer that the Borough Counts could not possibly continue after the Mayor was eventually concluded.
- 8.10 It is alleged that the Returning Officer refused to heed what was being repeatedly said to her but there are contradictory recollections of what was said, what was promised and the way the Returning Officer and her team relayed the information to the agents and candidates. The Head of Service explained in interview that a decision was not going to be made until the result for the Mayor was closer to declaration, but this is not what was recalled by the political observers who said their concerns were being ignored.
- 8.11 What is clear is that the agents and candidates of the parties met and in the early hours of the morning formally expressed their dissatisfaction to the Returning Officer at the time taken and that the count of the Borough wards could not take place once the Mayoral result had been declared.
- 8.12 This dilemma was of course known to the Returning Officer and her immediate core team, and the decision was made that the Borough Ward counts would be delayed and commence on the Saturday and the Sunday. This was conveyed to the parties and candidates.
- 8.13 The Mayoral result was declared by the Returning Officer at 4.45am
- 8.14 The count timeline detailed through a live blog in the Councils Your Croydon (2) shows that the first preference count result wasn't known until 00:58am.
- (a) 6pm start
  - (b) 10.45pm bundle recount of 1st preference
  - (c) 00.45am 1st preference due shortly
  - (d) 00.58am 1st preference result confirmed, and 2nd preference vote to commence shortly
  - (e) 03.35am 2nd preference to be recounted
  - (f) 04.45am Mayoral result confirmed
  - (g) 05.30am live feed ended
- 8.15 The 1st preference and 2nd preference counts had taken 10 hours 45 minutes, 6 hours 45 minutes after the predicted declaration.

## **9 The Rearranged Borough Ward Counts**

- 9.1 Delaying the Borough Ward Counts presented the Returning Officer with an immediate quandary in that the school had not been booked for the Saturday or the Sunday and negotiations with the school representatives were undertaken in the early hours of Saturday morning by the Head of Service to secure suitable facilities for the borough ward counts to take place.
- 9.2 To the schools credit it confirmed that facilities were available but only two of the halls and not the three utilised on the Thursday and Friday.

- 9.3 This also meant that two days of counting the Borough Wards had to be staffed and arranged within a very short timescale and senior staff approached as many staff on site as they could to get the resource to attend the venue to assist from 7pm on the Saturday and 2pm on the Sunday.
- 9.3 This “all hands to the pump” approach was commendable and the fact that staffing was achieved on both days highlighted the effort taken at the last minute to put teams together. This also involved the Head of Service contacting other London Borough Electoral Services Heads of Service personally known to him with several attending to help.
- 9.4 Unfortunately, having to arrange these two extra days presented additional problems:
- (a) the reception had to deal with staff who were attending without formal appointments or appropriate checks e.g., right to work in the UK.
  - (b) lists of attendees now applied to the two new separate days and not a continuation on the Friday evening.
  - (c) staff were bringing friends and family members with them to help who were then turned away because they were not needed. Some were upset at making the effort to get to the venue on a weekend at short notice only to be told they were not needed, this having to be managed sensitively.
  - (d) the allocation of staff to tables and to supervisors was not clear; and
  - (e) some public areas of the school remained open, particularly the swimming pool.
  - (f) Security was also provided to ensure access was as required although there were some concerns expressed as to the effectiveness of that.

## 10 The Borough Ward Counts (Saturday 7th May 2022)

- 10.1 12 wards had been identified as the first ones to be counted on the Saturday based on two halls available and one hall not being available.
- 10.2 The allocation is detailed in **Appendix E**
- 10.3 The verification of the boxes had already been completed and this meant that the ward set up used on the Friday/Saturday could be maintained and teams used to count each ward.
- 10.4 The first stage was to ensure that the verified figure received from the Friday morning's verification statement matched.
- 10.5 This involved counting the ballot papers allocated and then taking the figure to a control table where the figure was agreed or not. A zero tolerance was again enforced.

- 10.6 Staff stated that
- (a) the IT (Wi-Fi) was very slow at the control tables and the printers didn't work efficiently.
  - (b) the single width tables were not big enough for all the trays provided; and
  - (c) the covid screens also took up too much room.
- 10.7 Compliments were received from observers that most of the Supervisors were explaining what was happening and the atmosphere was much better than the previous Mayoral Count.
- 10.8 Unfortunately, this was not the experience of all staff who said they were subjected to observers being "rude and aggressive", and this contributed to a nervousness particularly for those who were inexperienced.
- 10.9 Compliments were received that the process was transparent with the wards clearly defined.
- 10.10 The Returning Officer is entitled to determine how the votes are counted with the law stating that the ballot papers must be kept face up and sorted in full view of the counting agents.
- 10.11 Except for 1 ward with a single vacancy, which was counted using first past the post, the methods used for the multi vacancy wards were consistent with established methods.
- (a) **Block Votes** – These are the papers marked with the same pattern of voting. These were identified, sorted, separated and the block votes recorded. This process was undertaken without incident.
  - (b) **Grass Skirts** – following the block vote calculations those remaining papers in the ward with variable voting patterns are then stuck to pre prepared card templates and the votes counted and recorded.
  - (c) Using this method, the non-votes, or those papers where people have not voted for all the candidates "under voting" can be recorded making this process extremely accurate.
  - (d) Comments varied about the use of grass skirts, but the majority preferred them because they are visible, transparent, and easy to double check when recounting.
  - (e) However, concerns were raised that, because of the lack of space, some of the grass skirts were being placed on the floor, onto chairs and even crossed over into neighbouring ward counts and that had made it difficult to follow what was happening.
  - (f) It was clear to observers that some of the supervisors were experienced but some did not understand what was required of them and there was a lot of "hand holding" showing people what to do. One member of staff interviewed explained that the team hadn't seen the grass skirts before so were learning as they went along.
  - (g) There was also an error on one of the grass skirts for Waddon and this took a while to address and added to the angst amongst those observing the process.

- (h) **Doubtful papers** – those papers that are not clear, separated and “adjudicated” by authorised “Deputies”.
  - (i) It is important that the adjudication of doubtful papers is consistent. All the tables were provided with the Electoral Commissions place mats that detailed case law examples which those adjudicating could refer to if there was any doubt.
  - (j) With adjudications of doubtfuls taking place across two halls this was vitally important, but inconsistencies were raised with the Returning Officer by the counting agents and examples revisited to ensure that a consistent approach was maintained.
  - (k) The decision of any doubtful paper by the Returning Officer is final and can only be challenged through the courts.
- 10.12 Concern was expressed by one of the Election Agents that the delays in receiving the accumulation of the results was taking an inordinate amount of time.
- 10.13 An example given of a result being collated by the scrutineers/counting agents, who had observed the block votes, grass skirts and doubtful adjudications, accurately relaying the result to him immediately after the count team had finished. It is then purported to have taken two hours for the result to permeate back out to the candidates and agents (New Addington South) and no explanation provided as to why there had been such a long delay.
- 10.14 The first result was declared at 10pm and results were then declared for 10 wards through to 00:25am with two wards, Waddon and Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood carried over until the Sunday for completion.
- 10.15 Communication was generally accepted as good but provisional figures prior to recounts and the rationale of why a recount was being held was considered by some to be important so that they could understand what was happening.
- 10.16 A live blog on the council’s web site was maintained throughout proceedings.

## 11 Sunday 8th May 2022

- 11.1 The Sunday count started at 2pm with 16 wards and the two wards carried over to be completed.
- 11.2 Very little comment was received about the Sunday with the consensus that the environment/mood of everyone was much better and had calmed down from the issues that had been experienced at the verification and Mayoral count.
- 11.3 One senior manager said that the count was actually “very good” with processes the same as those adopted on the Saturday and staff appeared to be more relaxed.
- 11.4 The first result was Park Hill and Whitgift at 3.50pm with results declared regularly through to Fairfield Ward declared at 7.18pm
- 11.5 The calmer mood / context no doubt contributed to the smoother running of the process on 8 May, but also the fact that staff appeared more confident and relaxed contributed to that, something the RO and her team may wish to

review and reflect upon.

## 12 Finance

- 12.1 The cost of the count venue and the ancillary items e.g, tables, screens etc. does seem excessive but the additional provision on the Saturday and Sunday and having to staff the venue for an additional two days contributed to the final cost.
- 12.2 There is no like for like comparison with neighbouring authorities because the demographic is different, the availability and type of venues for polling and the counts different, the times taken, and the number of staff employed also varied considerably.
- 12.3 All costs relating to local election polls and the count were guided by the London Returning Officers Fees and Charges order set every year by Returning Officers across London with slight amendments to some of the hourly rates agreed with the Returning Officer for the Saturday and Sunday given the necessity to staff those counts at very short notice.
- 12.4 The Fees and Charges Order may be fixed by the Borough Council, but there is no obligation to do so, but if set it must not be exceeded by the RO.
- 12.5 To give a degree of context Tower Hamlets verification and counts were held in an established commercial entertainments venue in Canary Wharf with all the infrastructure in place, a professional management team to liaise with, onsite security and external site security provided and commercial parking sites available.
- 12.6 Refreshments were not provided because the site sits in a retail area and breaks were scheduled during the day where staff and observers could leave the venue and return after the breaks.
- 12.7 It also helped having a system of recording those entering the venue and those leaving the venue with a barcoded ticket system with photographs that were checked for everyone entitled to be in the venue except for the staff who received appointment letters that they had to produce.
- 12.8 This cost £27,000 for three days with all the infrastructure included in the price. They also used a comparatively smaller number of staff, had a formal contract in place and had booked the venue 10 months before polling day. In addition, the verification and counts took place during the day, so the staffing hourly rates were lower.
- 12.9 It should be noted that a purpose-built venue with a similar set up is not available in Croydon.

## 13 Refreshments

- 13.1 Provision was made for staff refreshments on the Thursday verification and on the Friday Mayor and proposed Borough Ward count with packed lunches provided and breaks arranged.
- 13.2 Provision of refreshments for attendees, counting agents, candidates, agents, and guests, were not formally arranged with the venue for the Thursday evening but confirmed verbally with the established contacts. This is mentioned in the count plan that tea, coffees, and snacks would be available to purchase, and vending machines would be available as well.
- 13.3 Unfortunately, refreshments on the Thursday were not in situ as expected from the outset and this was arranged on the night with the school representatives, but only

the vending machines were available until approximately 1am with many resorting to getting refreshments from the garage across the road from the venue. This is mentioned in the count guidance as an alternative.

*“The canteen in the main School Building will be available for candidates, agents, and guests, and will be serving tea, coffee, and light refreshments. There are also some vending machines in the main school building. There is also a garage on Shirley Road opposite the school that sells hot drinks and food. Those attending the count may also bring their own food or drink”*

- 13.4 Following the issue with the verification arrangements were then put in place for the Friday for light refreshments to be made available to attendees from the outset.
- 13.5 At the rearranged counts on the Saturday and Sunday refreshments were purchased and made available to everyone including staff. The refreshments were free and laid out on tables for people to help themselves.
- 13.6 Political representatives interviewed strongly expressed their dissatisfaction that the refreshment arrangements on the Thursday and Friday were not as expected and should have been in place given the counts were taking place overnight into the early hours.
- 13.7 It is important to note that the Returning Officer has a duty of care to provide refreshments to all the staff employed at the verification and counts. Whether that legal duty extends to agents/candidates and guests is arguable. It should be noted that in respect of elections funded by central government (e.g., Parliamentary elections), the government does not fund refreshments for candidates and agents. Not all Returning Officers make provision for them at local elections either. But in such cases, the position is made clear in advance so that those affected can make alternative provision. Given what had been said in the count guidance, basic refreshments e.g., tea and coffee and light snacks should have been prearranged either to purchase or provided free of charge particularly knowing in advance that the verification and Friday counts were to progress into the early hours of the morning.
- 13.8 The RO has confirmed that a verbal agreement was in place with the school, but the problems that then occurred highlight the necessity to have a detailed written formal contract in place.

## 14 Recommendations

### 14.1 Recommendation 1: Structured and Effective Project Planning

- 14.1.1 To deliver a significant project the planning must be structured and enable those directly affected to understand what is required of them.
- 14.1.2 The project planning for these polls was not based on a formal auditable process with structured minutes, delegated tasks, and accountability if deadlines were not met. Too often the planning was based on last minute agendas and time restricted to discuss the finite detail and to get decisions made.
- 14.1.3 To address this the project group should consist of all those stakeholders who contribute to the delivery of the polls with a structured diarised meeting schedule pre-determined at least 6 months before the poll takes place. This schedule is then repeated at every meeting with new items or concerns raised at the time so that they are recorded, and the meetings then held more frequently as polling day



approaches.

- 14.1.4 An agenda example is attached at **Appendix F** and a copy of an example minuted meeting has been passed to the electoral services team for reference.
- 14.1.5 Delegation is fine for attendance at these meetings but should initially be aimed at a senior level to ensure that the importance of deadlines is understood and complied with.
- 14.1.6 Action points should also be revisited at the commencement of every meeting to ensure that tasks have not slipped and are not in danger of being delivered.
- 14.1.7 If they are then this should be formally recorded and the person on whom the responsibility lies left under no illusion of the serious consequences of not delivering what is expected of them, this directed by the CEO/RO.
- 14.1.8 If necessary, separate project plans for each area should be drafted if the requirements need to be more specific or technical.
- 14.1.9 Every meeting should be formally minuted utilising a member of staff used to recording minutes accurately (democratic services perhaps) with the minutes checked for accuracy and then distributed to the stakeholders.
- 14.1.10 Having a structured agenda enables the teams to prepare in advance and if they do not have any updates to provide then that is recorded, and the agenda moves on, but attendance should be mandatory as directed by the RO/CEO.
- 14.1.11 On occasion there may be the necessity for someone else to attend to give an update e.g., the police, Electoral Commission and this can be circulated if this occurs.
- 14.1.12 If the meetings are scheduled in advance these can be added to diaries and time allocated and if meetings end early because the updates are not particularly detailed, then so be it but on occasion a specific item agenda may need detailed discussion, and this must still be facilitated in a timely and effective manner involving those who need to be involved.
- 14.1.13 Appropriate contingency planning should be built in to consider staffing, venue etc related scenarios.

## **14.2 Recommendation 2: The Organisational Structure of the Core Elections Team**

- 14.2.1 A review of the structure of the electoral services team is recommended particularly with the requirements of the Elections Act 2022 and significant polls scheduled in London for 2024, a potential General Election, by elections and the possibility of combination. This needs as a minimum to look at capacity and qualifications.
- 14.2.2 Only two of the team hold a relevant qualification with one member of staff currently studying for the AEA certificate and losing 2 full time members of the team and replacing with temporary staff is not ideal.
- 14.2.3 Staff whether interim, locum, or permanent need to be clear as to their roles and responsibilities and then adhere to those as well as any standards set and legitimately expected.
- 14.2.4 With the introduction of the Elections Act 2022, concerns have been raised directly to Government by the Association of Electoral Administrators (4) and the Electoral

Commission detailing what will be significant challenges to Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers in the very near future (5).

- 14.2.5 In addition, we have mentioned that having a team that also undertakes other functions reduces capacity. This also needs to be part of the review.
- 14.2.6 Having a full-time qualified team acting together to establish a cohesive, experienced, and appropriately trained team will be of paramount importance into 2023 and beyond and it is the view of this review that the team as structured in 2022 will at best struggle and at worst are not equipped to deliver the requirements of the Act.

### **14.3 Recommendation 3: The Training of Staff**

- 14.3.1 Training was provided to Count Supervisors prior to the elections in May using an external supplier supported by the electoral services team and the Director of Policy, Programmes & Performance.
- 14.3.2 The training was well received and comprehensive but not all elements of the count training provided by the supplier applied to Croydon's proposed arrangements and set up. This was mentioned by several members of staff, and they said it made the training confusing. Future commissioned training should suit the purpose for which it has been commissioned and be fit for purpose, in particular by reflecting the "on the ground" arrangements at the Count.
- 14.3.3 Those interviewed who were responsible for the data inputting and the direct contact with the supervisors clearly did not understand the verification and count process.
- 14.3.4 Reports were also received from observers that some of the supervisors were clearly inexperienced, appeared not to understand what was required of them and needed help.
- 14.3.5 To address it is recommended that a core number of count supervisors are trained comprehensively in the ways of conducting counts and empowering them to identify staff that can act as counting assistants within their own teams that would provide familiarisation of process and continuity. Once the training is completed those who have undertaken the training are accredited and prioritised when the elections recruitment commences.
- 14.3.6 If Croydon continue to count by Ward this would mean training a core team of approximately 30 staff who the RO can turn to on every occasion. Training should cover the verification, counting methods, grass skirts, counting sheets, doubtful ballot papers and the roles of the agents entitled to observe.
- 14.3.7 Those responsible for the top table data should also be accredited and undertake the same training so that they are aware of the whole count process. Some authorities use accountants because of the experience in using data and some use those in the elections teams only who understand the process. It is the decision of the Returning Officer which to use or even recruit a combination of both.

### **14.4 Recommendation 4: The Decision on a Count Venue**

- 14.4.1 The decision of which count venue to use must be made at least 6 months before a scheduled poll.

- 14.4.2 There must be clarity as to who is responsible for logistics / events management around and associated with the count venue and that this should not be the elections core team (although the logistical etc. arrangements must support the delivery of the election responsibility for which lies with the Returning Officer and her team).
- 14.4.3 Unscheduled polls are of course difficult to predict but all preparations, staffing appointments and planning hinge on knowing what venue will be used.
- 14.4.4 The booking must be formalised with a contract that is scrutinised by legal, the core project team and ultimately signed off by the Returning Officer. Having a contract in writing
  - 14.4.4.1 serves as a record of commitment for both parties.
  - 14.4.4.2 prevents conflict and mitigates risk.
  - 14.4.4.3 ensures compliance.
  - 14.4.4.4 serves as a collaborative and communication tool that can be referred to.
  - 14.4.4.5 sets out the terms and conditions of hire; and
  - 14.4.4.6 is proof of what each party has mutually agreed.

#### **14.5 Recommendation 5: Planning for the Count**

- 14.5.1 The plan relating to the Count should cover in detail the front reception preparations and who is accountable for ensuring that the reception area is prepared and ready on time. Officers were appointed but collectively there wasn't any direct accountability to make sure everything was in place on time.
- 14.5.2 It is proposed that a separate count manager, directly responsible to the Head of Service is appointed, who reports back to the project group on the preparations and that person has appropriate authority and everyone informed who that person is.
- 14.5.3 This appointment should be separate to those appointed as DRO's who deal with doubtfuls concentrating on the count set up and ancillary items that may occur e.g., for example where toilet facilities failed it was the Head of Electoral Services who was approached, and this should not have happened.
- 14.5.4 This would also free up the Head of Service and the core team to run the count.

#### **14.6 Recommendation 6: Attendance at the Count**

- 14.6.1 Attendees/observers into the venue should be informed categorically of a deadline for applying to attend be that as a counting agent, guests, and apply to the media. This is for legal reasons as well as ensuring a smooth and secure process for entrance into the venue. This then would enable the team to prepare, albeit subject to a small window, the stationery and lists in advance without having to alter or add people who want to enter at the last minute or even on the day.
- 14.6.2 The deadline for the appointment of counting agents at this poll was Wednesday 27 April 2022.
- 14.6.3 This statutory deadline could also be used as the deadline for applications for guests and the media so that no-one is under an illusion that they can simply turn up and enter the venue regardless of how vocal they were in their complaints. This would also apply to replacements.

- 14.6.4 Tickets/authorisations to attendees could be posted on the Friday 1st class and then free up the core team to prepare ballot boxes being collected on the week of the poll.
- 14.6.5 It is accepted that on occasion someone may fall ill and be replaced but if this were to happen each application would need to be considered on its own merit with the RO having the discretion to agree or refuse if considered necessary. Replacement of statutory appointments e.g., election agent falling ill and needed to be replaced would be the only exception to this as was the case at this poll on one occasion.
- 14.6.6 These arrangements should be briefed including the restrictions and systemic approach to the Candidates and Agents at one of the briefings.

**14.7 Recommendation 7: A Systematic Approach to Managing Access to the Count**

- 14.7.1 The recording of who is entitled to be in each stage of the counts should be reviewed with the issuing of wrist bands and lanyards difficult to enforce particularly wrist bands that could be taken away in the evening, passed to someone else and that person then attends the venue and gains entry.
- 14.7.2 People will turn up trying to gain access to a count lacking authority to gain entry. This is not unique to Croydon. However, different arrangements exist to address this in other authorities e.g., Tower Hamlets introduced a photograph barcoded entry system that records the person entering the venue and also when they leave ensuring an audit of who is in the building. Others utilise professional venue managements services. Whatever arrangement is alighted upon, introducing a more detailed and robust entry system is acknowledged as resource heavy and needs significant preparation pre polling day but it is recommended that alternatives are considered by the Returning Officer. Whatever process is adopted should be shared with the political parties so that the management arrangements and in particular consequences of attending without appropriate permission is clear to all.
- 14.7.3 These arrangements should be briefed including the restrictions and systemic approach to the Candidates and Agents at one of the briefings.

**14.8 Recommendation 8: The Reception Arrangements at the Count**

- 14.8.1 The reception area should be organised so that there is filtering of the categories attending the venue e.g.

14.8.1.1	Staff
14.8.1.2	Candidates
14.8.1.3	Election Agents
14.8.1.4	Counting Agents
14.8.1.5	Media
14.8.1.6	Guests

- 14.8.2 Having candidates and agents not being able to gain access before the verification and counts is not acceptable and filtering would enable them to be prioritised.

## **14.9 Recommendation 9: Staffing at the Count**

- 14.9.1 Staff should provide their right to work in the UK prior to polling day and an exercise undertaken to ensure that all staff recorded on the Civica software (MEA) have their details up to date and not having to rely on photographic ID being produced at the reception table.
- 14.9.2 Staff appointments would then be restricted to those who had provided the necessary information and appointment letters/tickets sent out prior to attending the venue which could be checked on arrival.
- 14.9.3 The request for extra staff after the Mayoral count to ensure the staffing was adequate for the Saturday and Sunday was difficult because some had not worked on the counts before, but an exercise should be undertaken whereby the core staff held on the database should be checked and the appropriate information recorded in advance of the count and polling day itself.
- 14.9.4 Appropriate contingency planning should contemplate such scenarios.

## **14.10 Recommendation 10: An Effective Escalation Procedure**

- 14.10.1 The escalation procedure did not in our view work well. The Returning Officer and the staff must (in view of the issues) have a degree of formality in how identified concerns are raised and addressed so that reflecting on the specific issues we felt could have been handled better.
  - 14.10.1.1 the Returning Officer knows that matters that should be escalated to her are done in a timely fashion for decisions to be made.
  - 14.10.1.2 the staff understand this and have an agreed process to follow; and
  - 14.10.1.3 such matters are then resolved in a timely fashion, recorded and any outstanding identified and dealt with as a matter of priority.
- 14.10.2 However, a robust escalation procedure would and should relate to the entirety of the election process.

## **14.11 Recommendation 11: Length of Time taken to Undertake the Count**

- 14.11.1 The length of time taken, particularly the Verification and Mayor count, was raised by many. The necessity and right of the Returning Officer to undertake quality assurance checks of the figures from the count teams at all stages of the verification and counts from the outset of proceedings (which we support and endorse) undoubtedly attributed to this and, when taken into consideration with other issues identified below, this had an accumulated detrimental effect to the anticipated and calculated timings that everyone was expecting.
- 14.11.2 Expectations were set by unrealistic estimates. Most ROs do not attempt to give such estimates due the variables at play and the risks of doing this which crystallised at Croydon. We therefore recommend avoiding setting expectations that are not within the RO's control.
- 14.11.3 There were some aspects that contributed to the time taken that can be reviewed and addressed, namely:

- 14.11.3.1 The efficiency of the IT (W-Fi and equipment)
- 14.11.3.2 The PA system not operating as was expected after testing was confirmed, this adversely affecting communication to those in attendance.
- 14.11.3.3 The opening of receipted postal votes on polling day (Office receipt, polling stations and the sweep)
- 14.11.3.4 An understanding of the verification and count tolerances
- 14.11.3.5 The process of dealing with doubtful papers
- 14.11.3.6 Communication between the Count Supervisors, DRO's and the top tables
- 14.11.3.7 Double depth tables provided.
- 14.11.3.8 Training and accreditation of a core count supervisor team including those working on the data collection top tables.
- 14.11.3.9 Agreed and monitored timings for the preparation and commencement of the count venue.
- 14.11.3.10 Accountability to ensure that expectation of completed delegated tasks are met.

## 15 Conclusions

- 15.1 The Returning Officer, her core team, and those appointed as count supervisors and assistants delivered.
  - (a) an accurate verification.
  - (b) an accurate Mayoral count.
  - (c) 28 accurate Borough Ward Counts.
  - (d) no potential candidate was denied the right to stand.
  - (e) no voter was disenfranchised; and
  - (f) the results declared reflected the will of the electorate and the elections were conducted in an apolitical manner.
- 15.2 The above are (in summary) the key duties that the legislation place upon the Returning Officer.
- 15.3 Nothing we have found should detract from this as this reflects the overriding obligations placed upon the Returning Officer and her team in terms of running the election.
- 15.4 Croydon have also held two council by elections since without incident and complaint.
- 15.5 However, criticism has been aimed at the Returning Officer for the way the verification and counts were held. The allegations cited poor leadership, inadequate delegation, slow decision making, resources not utilised correctly and inadequate communication in the venue.

- 15.6 The criticism is in our view, to a limited extent, justified with those attending the venues subject to delays getting into the venue, long periods of inactivity in the halls and the mayoral count result extending beyond the predicted 10pm. This was inconvenient and frustrating not only for those waiting for the Mayoral result but those attending the Borough Ward Counts.
- 15.7 However, the variables at play in any election count may result in delays beyond expected times. Few ROs ever commit to any deadlines, as they cannot control them. Close counts requiring multiple recounts, security issues or unforeseeable medical emergencies to name but three are examples of circumstances that the review team have experienced that have thrown possible timeframes out of kilter.
- 15.8 The delays were undoubtedly frustrating and there were matters that could have been handled better in respect of that BUT the duty of the Returning Officer to run the election in accordance with the law and implement the will of the people was fulfilled.
- 15.9 We also found no evidence of any breach or failure to comply with any legislative requirement by the Returning Officer and her team.
- 15.10 There were no legal challenges to the election result (and had there been we can see no basis for them being successful).
- 15.11 The election was conducted lawfully, and democracy properly implemented. It was also transparent, accurate, safe and secure.
- 15.12 We were also very aware that the Returning Officer as CEO of the Council was coping with a multiplicity of significant and highly challenging issues at the Council, and under considerable pressure both in terms of workload, the significance of that, and consequential pressures on her time.
- 15.13 Historically, Croydon's elections are often close, have been subject to lengthy but accurate counts, held in competitive environments and these polls were no exception.
- 15.14 Croydon had the most ballot papers to count, 27,387 more than Tower Hamlets who were the second highest in London with comparative polls held and 81,975 more than Hackney.
- 15.15 The Croydon Mayor result after the first preference count showed a difference of 2,061 between the top two candidates. The final result after the second preference count, was a difference of only 589 so it was extremely close.
- 15.16 By way of comparison Tower Hamlets, the only other London Borough to go to a second preference count, had a difference of 11,639 after the first preference, so a significant margin and a difference of 7,317 between the candidates when the final result was known. No recounts or assurance checks were required or undertaken with the results accepted by all present.
- 15.17 The difference of only 589 for the Mayor poll undoubtedly added additional pressure on the Returning Officer and her core management team but the insistence on accuracy, albeit resulting in lengthy assurance delays, was in our opinion the correct methodology to adopt and the lack of legal challenge endorses the action taken.
- 15.18 However, final results and quality assurances aside, there were aspects of the organisation that should and could have been done better, and the number of recommendations reflect our observations in that respect.

## ENDNOTES

- (1) Section 35(4), 63(1) and (3) (b) Representation of the People Act 1983
- (2) [https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/LGE%20MAY%20RO%20Part%20A%20role%20and%20responsibilities\\_0.pdf](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/LGE%20MAY%20RO%20Part%20A%20role%20and%20responsibilities_0.pdf)
- (3) <https://news.croydon.gov.uk/live-croydon-mayor-and-local-elections-2022/>
- (4) <https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Letter-to-Sec-of-State-Elections-Act-2022.pdf>
- (5) <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/elections-act>



## **Appendix A: Terms of Reference**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Croydon Council held its first Mayoral Election and all Councillor Elections on 5th May 2022.

1.2 Concerns were raised at the count and on social media regarding the count, its organisation, the delivery of the counting process and the length of time the count took.

1.3 Whilst no formal challenge was made through the courts, to the outcome of the election, the Returning Officer wishes to commission an independent review into how the verification process and count was conducted to identify any lessons that can be learned for the future.

1.4 Areas that are intrinsically linked to the final verification and count will also be reviewed namely staffing levels, the arrangements in place for the running of elections in general and the challenges ahead with the introduction of the Elections Act 2022. This review will predominantly concentrate on the verification and count from the May 2022 polls.

1.5 The conduct of council elections is the personal responsibility of the Returning Officer and is impartial to ensure that the conduct of an election is in accordance with the law and is distinct from any duties as an employee of the Council.

1.6 The Returning Officer is directly accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder and not to the Council.

1.7 The Returning Officer can appoint one or more persons to discharge any or all functions but cannot delegate the personal responsibility for delivering the election.

1.8 The Council has a legitimate interest to ensure its elections are organised as efficiently and effectively as possible and as such this review will be reported to members via the appropriate committee and presented to Full Council.

1.9 This review will enable an understanding of what happened in the running of the count, share any lessons that can be learned for future count management and advise the council regarding the resource arrangements and the effectiveness of the processes and policies in place.

### **2. Areas to be covered in the Review**

We have laid out the main areas for the Review Team to cover and have suggested some more questions that they may wish to reflect upon in examining those main areas.

#### **Preparation for the verification and elections count**

Was the planning for the count adequate?

Was the assessment of the length of time the count was to take adequate?

Were risks appropriately identified and mitigated?

Was the IT support adequate and resilient?

Were appropriate resources allocated to the election team as a whole and the count specifically?

Was the venue selection appropriate?

Were alternative venues considered, why was Trinity chosen?  
Are there alternative venues that could be considered for the future?  
Were the arrangements for those attending the count adequate?  
Were there appropriate facilities for those attendees with a disability?  
Was car parking sufficient and managed effectively?  
Were the catering/refreshments adequate for those working and attending?  
Toilet facilities, cleaning, etc.  
Was the planning and organisation of the entry registration for those attending the count adequate?  
Was the planning and arrangement of communications and press liaison adequate?

### **Verification and count practice**

Was the tolerance level of variance when verifying the ballot paper accounts for the Mayoral count from the polling stations reasonable and appropriate?

Could the verification procedure be improved?

Could the way in which postal votes that are handed in at polling stations during the day and those delivered by Royal Mail late on polling day (Royal Mail Sweep) be improved?

Could the processes of counting of the vote cast for both the mayoral and councillor elections be improved?

Could the adjudication of spoiled ballot papers be improved?

Could the data entry at the top tables be improved?

Could the security arrangements be improved?

Were the assurances (bundle flicks/ recounts) on the accuracy of the Count/ outcome reasonable?

Was Croydon the last London Borough to conclude its count (Mayoral and Councillors)?

What is a reasonable balance between the time taken to verify and then count the votes cast and accuracy?

### **Capacity and capability**

Does the current design of the roles and responsibilities of the Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officers and other staff roles enable an effective and accurate count process?

What training was undertaken, was it sufficient, and could further elements be introduced?

### **Benchmarking**

How did the amount of time that it took for Croydon's Mayor and Councillor counts benchmark against other comparator boroughs?

Consideration to be given to the following but not exclusive to

Electorate

Staff numbers

Number of Wards

Contested electoral areas

Second Preference Vote

Size of majority margins

Nature of Count venues and inbuilt constraints Resources and practice

Was the cost of the election and the count reasonable when compared with other similar sized electorates, votes cast, numbers attending the count, margins of majority and count venue availability?

### **3. The Review Team**

The reviewers have been selected following consultation with several chief executives who have been involved with the London Elections Board and leading members of the Association of Electoral Administrators.

It is suggested that the review team interview the following as a minimum, but the review team also reserve the right to interview those who they feel will have a constructive input into the review process.

The Returning Officer

Deputy Returning Officers

The Electoral Services Team

Senior Count Supervisors

Count staff

Count team supervisors

Each Mayoral candidate

Agents for the political parties and/or Independent Candidates

The Elections Manager - Sutton

## Appendix B: Comparative Election Data

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> preference</b>	<b>Valid Ballot papers</b>	<b>Processed per minute</b>
<b>Croydon</b>	7.20 hours	97,458	221
<b>Hackney</b>	4.00 hours	62,043	259
<b>Lewisham</b>	2.45 hours	68,847	417
<b>Newham</b>	2.30 hours	63,487	423
<b>Tower Hamlets</b>	4.00 hours	86,009	358

## Appendix C: Examples of the Statements of Verification for the Mayor and the Borough Wards

### Verification Control Statement Extended

Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council - Thursday 5 May 2022

Table:

Broad Green (Borough)

Polling Station No. Location	Eligible Electors	Ordinary From	Ordinary To	Ordinary Provided	Ordinary Issued	Number in Box	Variance	Number Unused	Number Spoilt	Tendered Votes	Verified Votes	% Voters
10 West Thornton Primary Academy, Rosecourt Road	1,555	03,302,301	03,303,400	1,100	467	467	0	633			467	30.03%
11 Peppermint Childrens Centre, Franklin Way	677	03,303,401	03,303,900	500	118	118	0	382			118	17.43%
12 Christ Church Centre, Sumner Road	1,731	03,303,901	03,305,200	1,300	263	262	-1	1,037	1		262	15.14%
13 Broad Green Library, 89 Canterbury Road	1,745	03,305,201	03,306,500	1,300	438	438	0	862	8		438	25.10%
14 Christ Church Centre, Sumner Road	1,968	03,306,501	03,307,900	1,400	487	488	1	913	1		488	24.80%
15 Elmwood Infants School, Nursery Annexe	1,975	03,307,901	03,309,300	1,400	378	378	0	1,022			378	19.14%
16 Croydon & District Masonic Hall, The Doyle Ante-Room	1,812	03,309,301	03,310,600	1,300	317	316	-1	983			316	17.44%
Postal Votes	1,864	03,300,001	03,302,300	2,300	1,867	1,067		422	11		1,067	57.24%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,327</b>			<b>10,600</b>		<b>3,534</b>		<b>6,265</b>	<b>21</b>		<b>3,534</b>	<b>26.52%</b>

$$\% \text{ POLL} = \frac{\text{Total Votes Cast}}{\text{Electorate}} \times 100$$

$$\% \text{ POLL} = \frac{3,534}{13,327} \times 100 = 26.52\%$$

### Verification Control Statement Extended

Mayor of Croydon and Croydon Council - Thursday 5 May 2022

Table:

Mayor of Croydon (Mayoral Election)

Polling Station No. Location	Eligible Electors	Ordinary From	Ordinary To	Ordinary Provided	Ordinary Issued	Number in Box	Variance	Number Unused	Number Spoilt	Tendered Votes	Verified Votes	% Voters
134 Waddon Leisure Centre, Purley Way	2,028	52,805,901	52,807,400	1,500	414	414	0	1,086			414	20.41%
135 Aerodrome Children's Centre, Violet Lane	1,589	52,807,401	52,808,600	1,200	417	417	0	783	4		417	26.24%
136 Bramley Hill Centre, 27 Bramley Hill	2,101	52,808,601	52,810,100	1,500	608	608	0	892	1		608	28.94%
137 The Salvation Army, Booth Road	259	52,810,101	52,810,300	200	62	62	0	138			62	23.94%
138 The Den (Scout Hut), 30 Love Lane	1,849	54,802,501	54,803,800	1,300	559	559	0	741	1		559	30.23%
139 Croydon Youth Theatre Organisation, (entrance via Sandown Road)	1,620	54,803,801	54,805,000	1,200	518	518	0	682			518	31.98%
140 South Norwood Primary School, Gresham Road entrance only	1,881	54,805,001	54,806,400	1,400	484	484	0	916			484	25.73%
141 South Norwood Leisure Centre, 164 Portland Road	1,484	54,806,401	54,807,500	1,100	385	385	0	715			385	25.94%
142 Woodside Baptist Church - Hall adjoining, Spring Lane	1,686	54,807,501	54,808,700	1,200	525	525	0	675			525	31.14%
143 The Robert Fitzroy Academy, Entrance on Northway Road	1,824	54,808,701	54,810,000	1,300	438	438	0	862			438	24.01%
144 St Stephen's Church Hall, Warwick Road	1,599	53,802,501	53,803,700	1,200	297	294	-3	903	3		294	18.39%
145 Etemity Church, 374 Brinstock Road	1,732	53,803,701	53,805,000	1,300	343	343	0	957			343	19.80%
146 St Jude with St Aidan Church Hall, Thornton Road	1,686	53,805,001	53,806,200	1,200	411	411	0	789	3		411	24.38%
147 Life Tabernacle Church, 1 Campbell Road	1,936	53,806,201	53,807,600	1,400	330	330	0	1,070			330	17.05%
148 Boston Road Baptist Church Hall, 55 Boston Road	1,717	53,807,601	53,808,900	1,300	456	456	0	844			456	26.56%

## Appendix D: The calculation of the anticipated turn out figures

### BOROUGH

	Ward	Seats	Electors	30%	40%	50%	Actual Ballot papers	Actual Turnout 2022	Each hour (4 hours)	12 counters (papers each per hour)	Each hour (5 hours)	12 counters (papers each per hour)	Each hour (6 hours)	12 counters (papers each per hour)
1	Addiscombe East	2	8,868	2,660	3,547	4,434	3,817	43.04%	954	80	763	64	636	53
2	Addiscombe West	3	10,971	3,291	4,388	5,486	3,512	32.01%	878	73	702	59	585	49
3	Bensham Manor	3	11,525	3,458	4,610	5,763	3,247	28.17%	812	68	649	54	541	45
4	Broad Green	3	13,327	3,998	5,331	6,664	3,534	26.52%	884	74	707	59	589	49
5	Coulsdon Town	3	11,173	3,352	4,469	5,587	4,394	39.33%	1099	92	879	73	732	61
6	Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood	3	12,303	3,691	4,921	6,152	4,665	37.92%	1166	97	933	78	778	65
7	Fairfield	3	10,928	3,278	4,371	5,464	2,672	24.45%	668	56	534	45	445	37
8	Kenley	2	7,948	2,384	3,179	3,974	3,134	39.43%	784	65	627	52	522	44
9	New Addington North	2	7,191	2,157	2,876	3,596	1,843	25.63%	461	38	369	31	307	26
10	New Addington South	2	8,031	2,409	3,212	4,016	2,154	26.82%	539	45	431	36	359	30
11	Norbury and Pollards Hill	2	8,740	2,622	3,496	4,370	2,706	30.96%	677	56	541	45	451	38
12	Norbury Park	2	7,826	2,348	3,130	3,913	2,765	35.33%	691	58	553	46	461	38
13	Old Coulsdon	2	7,597	2,279	3,039	3,799	3,476	45.75%	869	72	695	58	579	48
14	Park Hill and Whitgift	1	4,307	1,292	1,723	2,154	1,812	42.07%	453	38	362	30	302	25
15	Purley and Woodcote	3	12,521	3,756	5,008	6,261	4,685	37.42%	1171	98	937	78	781	65
16	Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown	2	7,972	2,392	3,189	3,986	3,142	39.41%	786	65	628	52	524	44
17	Sanderstead	3	11,921	3,576	4,768	5,961	5,765	48.36%	1441	120	1153	96	961	80
18	Selhurst	2	8,434	2,530	3,374	4,217	2,200	26.08%	550	46	440	37	367	31
19	Selsdon and Addington Village	2	7,981	2,394	3,192	3,991	3,327	41.69%	832	69	665	55	555	46
20	Selsdon Vale and Forestdale	2	7,328	2,198	2,931	3,664	2,997	40.90%	749	62	599	50	500	42
21	Shirley	3	11,735	3,521	4,694	5,868	4,152	35.38%	1038	87	830	69	692	58
22	Shirley South	2	8,198	2,459	3,279	4,099	3,179	38.78%	795	66	636	53	530	44
23	South Croydon	3	12,465	3,740	4,986	6,233	4,788	38.41%	1197	100	958	80	798	67
24	South Norwood	3	11,540	3,462	4,616	5,770	3,507	30.39%	877	73	701	58	585	49
25	Thornton Heath	3	12,429	3,729	4,972	6,215	3,758	30.24%	940	78	752	63	626	52
26	Waddon	3	12,845	3,854	5,138	6,423	4,069	31.68%	1017	85	814	68	678	57
27	West Thornton	3	12,554	3,766	5,022	6,277	3,408	27.15%	852	71	682	57	568	47
28	Woodside	3	12,302	3,691	4,921	6,151	4,075	33.12%	1019	85	815	68	679	57
			<b>280,960</b>	<b>84,288</b>	<b>112,384</b>	<b>140,480</b>	<b>96,783</b>	<b>34.45%</b>	<b>24196</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>19357</b>	<b>1613</b>	<b>16131</b>	<b>1344</b>

<b>Review Check - 1st Preference (Actual)</b>			
<b>7:20 hours (440 minutes)</b>			
Mayor Turnout (Actual)			<b>97,458</b>
Turnout Percentage (Actual)			<b>34.69%</b>
Ballot papers per minute			221
Number of counters			336
Each counter per minute			0.66
Each counter overall			290
Team of 12 - Ballot papers per minute			7.91
<b>Review estimate - Overall</b>			
<b>4 hours (240 minutes)</b>			<b>Each hour</b>
Mayor Turnout		<b>112,834</b>	28,209
Percentage		40.00%	
Ballot papers per minute		470	
Number of counters		336	
Each counter per minute		1.3992	112,831
Each counter overall		336	112,834
12 counters - Ballot papers per minute		16.79	
Each team - Ballot papers per hour		1007	112834

	Time taken		
per counter	Council	Mayor 1st	Mayor 2nd
629-762	3.5-4 hours	3.5-4 hours	1.5-2 hours
314-450	2.0-3.0 hours	2.0-3.0 hours	1.5-2 hours

MAYOR

Mayor - 1st Preference	Votes	Spoilt	Total
	9,967	7	
	5,768	1,031	
	1,324	68	
	1,114	410	
	6,807	4	
	33,413	0	
	31,352	0	
	6,193	0	
	<b>95,938</b>	<b>1,520</b>	<b>97,458</b>
Mayor - 2nd Preference	Votes	Spoilt	Total
	5,199	198	
	6,671	1,545	
	0	74	
	<b>11,870</b>	<b>1,817</b>	<b>13,687</b>

## Appendix E: Timelines

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022 6pm - Mayor Count

6.00pm	Count commences
10.00pm	Anticipated Borough Counts delayed
10.45pm	Bundle recount of 1 <sup>st</sup> preference
00.45am	1 <sup>st</sup> preference due shortly
00.58am	1 <sup>st</sup> preference result confirmed and 2 <sup>nd</sup> preference vote to commence shortly
03.35am	2 <sup>nd</sup> preference to be recounted
04.45am	Mayor result confirmed
05.30am	Live feed ended

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2022 (7pm - 12 wards)

1	Addiscombe East	10.00pm	Result declared
2	Coulsdon Town	10.20pm	Result declared
3	Addiscombe West	10.40pm	Result declared
4	Broad Green	11.05pm	Result declared
5	West Thornton	11.40pm	Result declared
6	Woodside	11.45pm	Result declared
7	Thornton Heath	11.55pm	Result declared
8	Bensham Manor	00.05am	Result declared
9	Croydon South	00.20am	Result declared
10	South Norwood	00.25am	Result declared
11	Waddon	00.45am	Carried over to Sunday
12	Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood	00.45am	Carried over to Sunday



Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2022 2pm (16 wards plus two carried over)

13	Park Hill and Whitgift	3.50pm	Result Declared
14	Selsdon Vale and Forestdale	3.50pm	Result Declared
15	Sanderstead	4.40pm	Result Declared
16	Kenley	4.45pm	Result Declared
17	Selhurst	4.49pm	Result Declared
18	New Addington South	5.05pm	Result Declared
19	New Addington North	5.17pm	Result Declared
	Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood	6.40pm	Result Declared
20	Old Coulsdon	5.09pm	Result Declared
21	Selsdon and Addington Village	5.13pm	Result Declared
22	Shirley North	6.00pm	Result Declared
23	Purley Oaks and Riddlesdown	6.05pm	Result Declared
24	Norbury and Pollards Hill	6.09pm	Result Declared
	Waddon	6.34pm	Result Declared
25	Purley and Woodcote	6.54pm	Result Declared
26	Norbury Park	6.59pm	Result Declared
27	Shirley South	7.14pm	Result Declared
28	Fairfield	7.18pm	Result Declared

## Appendix F: Example of Generic Agenda

### Appendix F Example of generic agenda

Election Planning Group  
Agenda 8 February 2022 –  
5pm

#### **Polls - Thursday 5 May 2022**

Location:

Room 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Town Hall or Virtual (Teams)

- Minutes of last meeting
- Action points from last meeting
- Election's update (SA/JC)
  - Candidates/Agents briefings
  - Staffing
  - Equipment
  - Count venue arrangements
  - Polling Places
  - Plans/Risk Assessments
  - Stakeholders update
  - Covid implications
- IT
- Facilities/Logistics
- Communications
- Legal
- Electoral Commission Updates
- AOB
- Date of next meeting
  
- Welcome & Introductions (RO)