

Report No.	19-44
<b>Decision Required</b>	

## 2019 TRIENNIAL ELECTION: TIMETABLE, EARLY PROCESSING AND CANDIDATES' NAMES

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This report provides Members with the timetable for the 2019 triennial local authority elections, acknowledges that early processing of votes will be decided by the respective territorial authorities, and seeks a decision on the order in which the candidates' names are to be shown on the voting documents.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 19-44;
- b. notes the timetable for the 2019 triennial local authority elections, and voting method by postal vote;
- c. acknowledges the extent of early processing of votes will be determined by the respective territorial authority; and
- d. agrees that the names of the candidates at the 2019 Horizons Regional Council elections be arranged in:
  - i. alphabetical order of surname; or
  - ii. pseudo-random order of surname; or
  - iii. random order of surname.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 3.1. The 2019 Elections have been budgeted for.

### 4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1. A public notice will be issued asking for candidate nominations. Candidate Information Packs will be available and these include information about Horizons Regional Council, the responsibilities of elected members, and the elections process. Both the Electoral Officer and Deputy Electoral Officer are available to respond to any questions from prospective candidates. In previous elections years, Horizons has linked with the **Territorial Authorities (TAs)** so information on Horizons Regional Council activities is also presented when the TAs hold candidate information meetings. It is anticipated this will continue for this elections year.

### 5. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 5.1. There is no significant business risk impact.

## 6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The next triennial local authority elections will be held on 12 October 2019. The Council made a decision at the Council meeting on 7 June 2017 to retain the status quo *First Past the Post* electoral system for the 2019 elections. Planning for the elections themselves has commenced. While the TAs in the Region carry out much of the work for the Horizons Regional Council elections, Horizons is still required to make a number of decisions relating to the election process.

## 7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1. **Timetable:** the timetable for the 2019 elections is set out in the **Local Electoral Act 2001** and the **Local Electoral Regulations 2001 (LER)**. The following timetable applies for the forthcoming triennial elections:

Public notice of election / calling for nominations	(Wed to Fri) 17 - 19 July
Nominations open and preliminary roll open for inspection	Friday, 19 July
Nominations close – <b>NOON</b>	Friday, 16 August
Public notice of day of election, candidates names	(est) Wed, 21 August
Delivery of voting documents	20 – 25 September
Election Day voting closes – <b>NOON</b>	Saturday, 12 October
Preliminary results available	pm Saturday, 12 October
Declaration of results	(est) 15 – 17 October

- 7.2. The voting method will be by postal vote. The Chief Executives of the Councils involved with the Online Voting Working Party, advised in December 2018 that there would be no online voting for the 2019 Elections due to prohibitive costs. The processing of all Regional Council votes will be carried out by the TAs, and early processing of votes will be carried out (as in the past) as decided by the respective TAs.

- 7.3. **Order of names on voting papers** – Prior to the enactment of the Local Electoral Regulations 2001, candidates' names were required to be listed on the voting documents in alphabetical order by surname.

- 7.4. **Clause 31(1)** of the Local Electoral Regulations 2001 now allows the Council to decide whether the candidates' names are to be arranged on the voting documents in alphabetical order of surname, pseudo-random order, or random order. In the absence of any Council resolution approving another arrangement, the candidates' names must be arranged in alphabetical order of surname. The features of each arrangement are described as follows:

### Option 1 – Alphabetical order of surname

This is the order which has been required to be used at previous local authority elections and is self-explanatory. This is the simplest method for the elector. It is the method they are familiar with and is the system used at the parliamentary elections. There is a suggestion that candidates with a surname starting at the top end of the alphabet have an unfair advantage over others with a 'lower' alphabetic ranking. There is no research that we are aware of which confirms this view.

Option 2 – Pseudo-random order\*\* (one randomised order for all voting documents)

Under this option, the candidates' names for each election are placed in a hat (or similar receptacle), mixed together, and then drawn out of the receptacle with the candidates' names being placed on all voting documents for that election in the order in which they are drawn. This system could possibly be more difficult for the elector to locate the candidate they wish to vote for, especially if there are a large number of candidates standing for election. Although it would resolve the issue (if there is one) of those candidates with a surname starting with the letter "A" or "B" etc having an unfair advantage over those candidates whose surname starts with a middle or later letter of the alphabet, that advantage would then be given to the first few candidates whose names are drawn out of the hat.

(\*\*Note: Although the term 'pseudo-random order' is used in the Local Electoral Regulations to describe this arrangement, this is a somewhat imperfect description in that the term 'pseudo-random' is understood by mathematicians and/or information technology specialists to have a quite different meaning).

Option 3 – Random Order (all documents have a different order)

Under this option, the names of the candidates for each election are shown in a different order on each and every voting document, utilising software that permits the names of the candidates to be laser printed in a different order on each paper. This option suffers from the same (possible) difficulty for the elector as described under the 'pseudo-random' method.

## 8. COMMENT

- 8.1. The cost of printing the voting documents employing either Option 1 or Option 2 will be identical. Should the Council adopt Option 3 (random order) there will be some increase in cost because of the need to individually laser print each voting document, rather than having them pre-printed. While it is not yet possible to give an estimate of the likely additional costs if this option is chosen, these are not expected to be substantial.
- 8.2. The LER allows each local authority to determine, by resolution, which 'order of candidate name' option it wants to employ. Because regional councils, territorial authorities, district health boards and licensing trusts are all local authorities as defined under the Local Electoral Act 2001, each authority could potentially opt for a different name order option. If this scenario was to occur, a regional council voter could be faced with the order of candidates being different for all the main issues they are required to vote on. This could be confusing for electors, particularly if there are a considerable number of candidates standing for election. It has the potential to discourage people from voting for more than a few candidates, or in the worst case scenario, stop them from voting at all. Most of the TAs in our Region are yet to decide on their order of candidates.
- 8.3. The names of candidates in the Candidate Profile Book which accompanies the voting documents, will appear in alphabetical order, no matter what order they are listed on the voting document.
- 8.4. All three options have both merit and potential drawbacks. However, 'alphabetical order' has traditionally been the preferred choice for Horizons Regional Council and it is therefore recommended that the names of the candidates at the 2019 Horizons Regional Council elections be arranged in alphabetical order.

**9. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS**

9.1. Members will receive a future report on the pre-election communications strategy.

**10. SIGNIFICANCE**

10.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

Craig Grant  
**ELECTORAL OFFICER**

Kay Booth  
**DEPUTY ELECTORAL OFFICER**

**ANNEXES**

There are no attachments to this report.