

**Committee:** Audit and Standards Committee

**Date:**

**Title:** Independent review of postal voting processes

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## Summary

1. The issues at the May 2024 General Election were widely reported at the time, relating to the dispatch of Postal Votes to voters in the Chelmsford wards of the North West Essex Constituency.
2. Shortly following the General Election, the Leader, Cllr Petrina Lees, commissioned Peter Stanyon, Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators, to carry out an independent expert review of what happened, and to make recommendations for the future.
3. Simultaneously, the Electoral Commission considered all such issues that arose around the country against performance standards issues in respect of the UK Parliamentary General Election. The Commission sets performance standards for Returning Officers which are designed to support the delivery of a consistent, high-quality service for voters and those standing for election, and monitors and reports on performance against these. Following the moderation process (including review of the error by the Electoral Co-ordination Advisory Board and a final assessment by the Director of Electoral Administration & Guidance) the Electoral Commission has now determined the error does not require formal assessment, and this brings their formal moderation process to a close.
4. Mr Stanyon's review report has now been received, with recommendations, and is presented in full to Members.

## Recommendations

5. Members are requested to note this report.

## Financial Implications

6. None.

## Background Papers

7. The papers referred to by the author in the preparation of this report are mentioned in the body of the report and are already published.

## Impact

8.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Running elections that meet the high standards expected is a fundamental duty of the district council.
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

### Situation

9. As addressed in detail in the attached independent expert's review report.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the General Election result in the NW Essex Constituency is challenged	0	4	There is a strict deadline following elections in which challenges must be lodged with the Electoral Court, and this date has long since passed without challenge, so there is no risk in this regard.
That issues are either not identified or are not acted upon for the conduction of future elections	1	4	This independent expert review has fully considered and identified both the specific issues and any broader associated risks. These shall now be followed by development and delivery of an action plan to thoroughly

			address all such issues.
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project