ITEM	Overview and Scrutiny Briefing Note

Title	**Elections discussion**		
Report of the			
Author	**Chairman of OSCOM**	**Ext**	
Report to	**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**	**Date**	

Briefing Summary

Meeting of OSCOM Chairman 11 October 2017
With Roger Tetstall, Frances Cleland, Cllrs Dorothy Baverstock and Jim Neal.

In general, OSCOM have three ways of dealing with the work programme.

1. Round Table Discussion
2. Briefing Notes
3. Full agenda Items with officer attendance.

At the AWAY DAY there were a number of items from members that required a short meeting with Officers. The first one was to decide if there were any areas that needed further investigation within the Electoral system of Test Valley and questions were sought from Cllrs Baverstock and Neal. The Electoral System has mainly items that are set down by Government and TVBC have little or no say in changing these so rather than go through the entire department it was decided to look at the system as a whole with Dorothy and Jim.

Main focus of the document

The questions were varied and I will run through these with the main parts only.

- **Postal Votes**- requirements for the issue and receipt of postal votes are laid down by Government in legislation, and we have seen an increase year on year as attached statistics. Elections having National Interests generally have a greater response. The Postal Vote system is run strictly according to the rules and every care is taken to ensure all postal votes are issued and received in line with the legislation.

- **Is there any Encouragement to constituents to have a postal Vote?-** There is a tremendous amount of paperwork sent out to electors giving them details of polling stations, dates and offering postal votes, including poll cards. The Communications team try to encourage people to vote, using a variety of methods to raise awareness, such as with Facebook, Twitter and press releases. The emphasis is on encouraging people to register to vote generally (rather than on postal votes specifically) but electors are given the opportunity to request that a postal vote application form is sent to them as part of their registration application, via a specific question on the on-line or paper form. Any telephone registrations that are taken by the elections team or CSU also include this question.

- **Electronic Voting-** informed sources suggest that the USA vote and Russia's possible involvement have put this back until people feel it is secure and the Government can guarantee a safe and secure result. Suggest TVBC Groups lobby their own MP as it is not in the hands of TVBC.

- **Polling Stations-** It was felt that the polling stations in general work well with relatively few problems occurring. Crosfield Hall in Romsey and a couple of others will be looked at in further detail and problems, endeavoured to be sorted before the next election. Any member that feels there is a problem within their area should bring this to the attention of Frances Cleland. The possibility of using the new community centre at Abbotswood will be looked at before the May 2019 elections. Following the forthcoming Community Governance Review, there will be a polling district and polling place review, although there will not be sufficient time available to conclude this before May 2019. Member involvement in this review will be actively encouraged and will provide an ideal opportunity to look at the current polling station arrangements.

- **Calculations of charges for elections by Parish/ Parish Ward-** the average cost is £2.50 per voter in each election and all charges to Parish Councils are charged by actual invoices received for work done and not by estimates etc. Charges can come from hall hire, printing of polling cards etc. Costs where an election is combined would obviously be apportioned appropriately between all polls taking place on the same day.

- **Romsey Town and Romsey Extra-** The potential confusion over parish boundaries and borough wards in Romsey will be addressed in the community governance review. That will be another discussion.

- **Proxy Votes-** The problem seems to be that there is no way you know whether your proxy vote was placed for your preferred candidate. There is no selection area on the form, and current legislation does not allow for it to be included and so the form cannot be changed. It was decided that the number of proxy votes was so small it did not warrant any further discussion.

- **Double Voting** – The issue of people being registered in two places and casting two votes at parliamentary elections was discussed. The current legislation does not allow for any 'cross checking' of people voting, though it is an issue which has been raised at a national level by electoral administrators and the Electoral Commission. Anybody that becomes aware of any possible electoral offence having been committed, such as double voting, should report this directly to the police for investigation.

Other items were discussed

- Very short notice elections (SNAP) called just after an election is not helpful and causes enormous pressure on the system. However, the TVBC staff did a really good job with no problems.

- After the count and election there is a 'wash up' meeting to look at what went well and those changes that could be introduced to make it even better.

- Any problems that members encounter either before, during or after the election should be reported back to Frances.

- The final point is that we are dealing with Victorian Legislation with add on's and at some time Government will have to re-write legislation or modernise it.

Proposed Outcomes for consideration

It was felt that the Electoral system within TVBC is working extremely well, very few problems and there were no further areas that we felt we were required to look at.

Our thanks to Roger as returning Officer for his expertise and Frances Cleland for her excellent department and running of the electoral services.

Confidentiality	
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.	
No of Annexes:	

Postal Vote Statistics for OSCOM Panel – 11 October 2017

Year	Election	No. of PVs Dispatched	No. of PVs Returned	% Return for Election	Electorate (% which are set up for postal voting)
2011	Borough	14,829	11,222	76%	90,960 (16%)
2011	AV Referendum	15,590	11,762	75%	89,731 (17%)
2012	PCC	16,392	7,958	49%	91,963 (18%)
2013	HCC	16,164	10,706	66%	92,534 (17%
2014	European Parliamentary	17,271	11,595	67%	92,664 (19%)
2015	Borough*	17,825	15,527	87%	92,316 (19%)
2015	UKPGE* ^	18,186	15,829	87%	94,166 (19%)
2016	PCC	16,871	8,629	51%	93,809 (18%)
2016	EU Referendum	19,920	18,151	91%	94,559 (21%)
2017	HCC	18,354	11,901	65%	94,862 (19%)
2017	UKPGE ^	19,599	17,170	88%	94,701 (21%)

* The 2015 elections saw Borough and Parliamentary on the same day, and therefore the postal votes were combined into one pack. The Over Wallop ward was not contested, and therefore is not included in the Borough figures for that year.

^ The figures provided are for the TVBC area only and do not take into account the areas of Basingstoke and Southampton that are taken on for parliamentary elections under the current boundaries.