

Greater London Authority Elections

A report from the 2004 Elections Review Committee

December 2004



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**Greater London Authority
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Chairman's foreword



On 10th June 2004, 1.9 million Londoners cast their votes in a unique election. For the first time, the elections for the Mayor of London, London Assembly and the European Parliament, took place on the same day. More than 260,000 of those voters chose to vote by post. The London Assembly considered it was right that, following on from the investigation that Assembly undertook after the 2000 Mayoral and London Assembly elections, we should look at the issues thrown up by the 2004 elections.

Much of the media attention and public debate about postal voting has focused on issues of security and integrity. Our investigation has uncovered another, equally important, concern: to what extent can we guarantee that those who register for a postal vote will have their votes counted?

423,488 Londoners were registered to vote by post in the 2004 elections. 159,704 of them did not vote. It is convenient to assume that the majority of these people simply decided not to vote on this occasion, but this is not necessarily the case. Thousands of postal ballot papers were simply not delivered.

Royal Mail's quality of service is sufficiently poor that at least one London Borough Returning Officer decided to use the Borough's own staff to deliver postal ballot papers to electors. The Returning Officer for Greenwich and Lewisham told us that he had decided not to use Royal Mail's services when he was told that only four out of five postal ballot papers would be delivered, leaving one in five postal voters effectively disenfranchised.

These findings are food for thought for the Government, which is seeking to promote postal voting and, despite the recommendations of The Electoral Commission, is still prepared to entertain the idea of all-postal ballots. The Electoral Commission has predicted continued increases in the numbers of electors registering for a postal vote. Our report shows that there is some serious work to be done in London to prevent postal voting becoming more like a lottery than an election.

The Committee also considered many other issues around the campaign, the public information exercise, the count and the declaration of results. Some of our recommendations will need primary legislation and the Committee commends them to the Government and The Electoral Commission.

The one significant recommendation from the 2000 scrutiny process that was accepted was the rescheduling of the count from 10pm to start at 9am, therefore allowing candidates, agents and staff a good night's sleep!

I would like to thank the Members of the Committee and the officers of the Assembly for their hard work in enabling the Committee to deliver this report on a tight timetable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Brian Coleman'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Cllr Brian Coleman FRSA
Chairman of the Committee

The 2004 Elections Review Committee

The London Assembly 2004 Elections Review Committee was established on 21 July 2004. The purpose of the Committee was to review and report on the 2004 combined elections in London. This Report presents the findings and recommendations of the Committee.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Committee were to review and report on the following aspects of the 2004 combined elections in London:

- The voter experience;
- planning, preparation and implementation of the project, and the adjustments made when the Government decided to combine the elections;
- The statutory framework for the delivery of the elections;
- Balancing statutory compliance and voter friendliness;
- The effectiveness and value for money of the research, voter education, publicity and other communications undertaken by London Elects; and
- Lessons to be learned from the 2004 elections in preparation for future GLA elections and by-elections, and generally.

Committee Membership

The membership of the Committee was as follows:

Brian Coleman (Chair)	Conservative
Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair)	Liberal Democrat
Len Duvall	Labour
Peter Hulme-Cross	UK Independence
Darren Johnson	Green

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Summary of recommendations

Postal Voting on Request

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to extend the statutory timetable for GLA elections by a week, in order to allow time for the Mayoral address booklet to be distributed ahead of the despatch of postal ballot papers. (Recommendation 1, page 14)

Better project management of postal voting on request (by London Elects, Royal Mail and the Boroughs) is needed, and an increased standard of service from the delivery contractor (in this case, Royal Mail), to ensure electors receive the Mayoral address booklet before their postal ballot papers, and to maximise the delivery rate of polling cards and the delivery and return of postal ballot papers. (Recommendation 2, page 18)

Awareness-raising and publicity

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to place a statutory duty upon Returning Officers to raise awareness and understanding of elections. Whilst we make this recommendation in the context of our discussion of Greater London Authority elections, it ought equally to be applied to all other elections in the UK. (Recommendation 3, page 20)

The Greater London Returning Officer and the Electoral Commission should redouble their efforts to provide information to electors about the London Assembly elections, in order to satisfy the sixty per cent of people who did not feel they had enough information about the 2004 London Assembly elections. (Recommendation 4, page 21)

Ballot Papers, Voter Instructions and Poll Cards

The Government should delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer (in consultation with the Electoral Commission and London Borough Returning Officers) to determine a standard format and content of polling cards for GLA elections. These should be designed so as to encourage turnout and provide useful information to electors (eg map showing the location of polling station, telephone number for queries). (Recommendation 5, page 22)

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer (in consultation with the Electoral Commission) for the design of the ballot paper and the wording of voting instructions, wherever they appear (e.g. poll cards, booklet, notices in polling booths, ballot papers, absent vote papers). In exercising this duty, the GLRO should commission market research to identify the clearest, most accessible designs, explanations and voting instructions so as to minimise voter confusion. (Recommendation 6, page 27)

Blank / Uncertain Ballot Papers

The Government should amend elections legislation, by May 2007, so that the declaration of results sheets are required to make clear the distinction between 'blank' and 'uncertain' ballot papers. This is particularly important for GLA elections, in which the double-vote voting system produces large numbers of unmarked / uncertain ballot papers. (Recommendation 7, page 27)

Greater London Returning Officer's Powers of Direction

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to provide a general power of direction for the Greater London Returning Officer to direct Constituency Returning Officers to perform functions in support of Greater London Authority Elections. (Recommendation 8, page 29)

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, providing Constituency Returning Officers with powers of direction over Borough Returning Officers concerning matters that Borough Returning Officers traditionally or statutorily perform. (Recommendation 9, page 29)

Electronic Counting

The Government should introduce legislation, by May 2007, to allow running indicative totals for individual candidates to be shown during an electronic count, to provide an equivalent of the mounting piles of ballot papers that are visible during a manual count. (Recommendation 10, page 30)

The count for future GLA elections should, subject to economic considerations, be held at one multi-constituency count centre. (Recommendation 11, page 31)

The Government should introduce legislation to enable the Greater London Returning Officer to order a recount in Greater London Authority elections. (Recommendation 12, page 32)

Facilities at City Hall

Subject to constraints of space and security considerations, the Greater London Returning Officer should provide better arrangements for candidates and agents –there is a need for shared facilities to be accessible and for those attending the declarations to be able to move around the building easily. Printouts of results declared at City Hall should be made available immediately after each declaration. (Recommendation 13, page 32)

Elections Legislation

The Government should ensure that all legislation, rules and regulations for GLA elections are enacted so as to take effect at least a year before the start date of the elections. (Recommendation 14, page 34)

Insurance

The Government should provide an indemnity to cover the risks associated with GLA elections that are not covered by reasonably priced commercial insurance, especially the possibility of a re-run of the Mayoral election upon the death of a candidate. (Recommendation 15, page 35)

Future Mayoral and London Assembly Elections

We are not convinced that the 2008 Greater London Authority elections would be an appropriate vehicle for a multi-channel pilot, because GLA elections are the most complex elections to take place in the UK, and systems that provide the requisite levels of security, integrity and reliability are not likely to be available, and fully tested for the scale of implementation, in time for a successful London-wide election.

Under no circumstances should there be a 2008 Greater London Authority election multi-channel pilot unless there have been successful borough election multi-channel pilots in 2006. (Recommendation 16, page 36)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London Assembly established the 2004 Elections Review Committee in July 2004, to review and report on the combined Mayoral, London Assembly and European Parliamentary elections that were held in London on 10 June 2004. The Committee held three evidentiary hearings in October and November 2004,¹ and invited written views and information from a wide range of organisations and individuals, including candidates and agents in the combined elections, those involved in planning and managing the elections, non-governmental organisations, and voters.² As part of our investigation, we have followed up the recommendations made by our predecessor Committee, the 2000 Elections Investigative Committee.³ The Committee also benefited from an initial evaluation of the elections, commissioned by the Greater London Returning Officer.⁴ The Committee is grateful to all those who contributed to its investigation.
- 1.2 During our investigation, we have sought to understand and analyse the elections from the point of view of electors. Many of our findings and recommendations are intended to improve the accessibility and transparency to electors of future GLA elections, as well as seeking to ensure that voters receive all the information they need about the elections, in good time before casting their vote.

2. Combined Elections

- 2.1 There is no prospect of another combination of Mayoral and London Assembly ('Greater London Authority') elections with European Parliamentary elections until 2024. For that reason, we have focused most of our investigations and discussions on Greater London Authority elections. However there are three important points to be made about the combination of elections. The first is the impact of the combination of elections on voter turnout. It appears as though the combination of elections resulted in higher turnout than might otherwise have been expected in the European Parliamentary elections (turnout was 38 per cent, compared to 24 per cent in 1999).⁵ This supports the argument in favour of combined elections, that it is unrealistic to expect electors to turn out to two elections within six weeks of one another. On the other hand, the combination of elections may have confused some voters, and certainly caused a few headaches among electoral administrators.⁶

¹ A list of those who attended the meetings is included at Appendix 3. Transcripts of the meetings are available on the London Assembly website, www.london.gov.uk/assembly/elect04/index.jsp.

² A summary of written comments and information received by the Committee is included at Appendix 5

³ London Assembly Elections Investigative Committee, May 2002, Elections and Electorate Engagement – full Report available on the London Assembly website, at www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/pubser/elections.pdf. For recommendations made in the Report: see table included in the Report at agenda item 4 of the meeting of the Committee on 20 October 2004 (available at <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/elect04/2004/elect20oct/elect20octagenda.jsp#4>)

⁴ Greater London Authority Director of Secretariat, September 2004, '2004 Combined Elections – an initial review commissioned by the Greater London Returning Officer'. Hereafter referred to as 'the Director of Secretariat's review'.

⁵ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 13, 10 November 2004, page 15

⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 24

- 2.2 Our second point is that the lateness of the formal decision to combine the European Parliamentary and Greater London Authority elections, which involved moving the date of the Greater London Authority elections, was a source of considerable uncertainty, inconvenience, and possible additional cost to those managing the elections.⁷
- 2.3 Finally, in six London Boroughs (Merton, Croydon, Lewisham, Enfield, Barking and Hackney), there were local authority by-elections on 10 June. We understand that a decision was taken by the Hackney Returning Officer that the by-election in the New River ward should be administered separately and according to different rules. This meant, for example, that the polling station opening hours for the local by-election were shorter than those for the European Parliamentary and Greater London Authority elections. We do not see how this can possibly be in the interests of electors. Legislation should be introduced so as to require any local election being conducted on the same day as GLA elections should be 'combined', so that the same set of rules is in operation for all elections – it is confusing for voters to have two separate elections on the same day, in the same borough, and in the same polling stations, but with different polling station opening hours.⁸ We also understand that the London Borough of Lewisham ran out of ballot papers in their local authority election on 10th June, as a result of a miscalculation. This has been the subject of a scrutiny review by Lewisham Council.

3. Planning and Management of the Elections

- 3.1 Immediately after the 10 June elections, the Greater London Returning Officer commissioned the Greater London Authority's Director of Secretariat to conduct an initial evaluation of the project.⁹ The Director of Secretariat's report was based on interviews with a cross-section of those involved in planning and managing the elections. The report included 29 recommendations for future GLA elections, based on lessons learned in 2004.¹⁰
- 3.2 The 2004 Elections Review Committee invited feedback on that report and its recommendations from a wide range of stakeholders, including: The Electoral Commission; London Borough Returning Officers; Electoral Services Managers; political party agents; candidates in the elections; non-governmental organisations such as the Electoral Reform Society, London Civic Forum, and Charter 88; media representatives; equalities-based non-governmental organisations such as Greater London Action on Disability, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, and local branches of Age Concern; and the Government Office for London.
- 3.3 Everyone who responded to our request for views and information stated that they agreed with most or all of the recommendations made in the Director of Secretariat's report. The Minister for London, Keith Hill MP, wrote, 'it is fair to say that the Government would not agree with every statement made in that report – our different organisations clearly remember certain processes and events rather differently. Nevertheless the report is thorough and useful and points to some key lessons which we all need to learn from the 2004 experience'. Tony Lee, Managing Director of DRS Data &

⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 5

⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, pages 1-2

⁹ Greater London Authority, September 2004, '2004 Combined Elections: An initial review commissioned by the Greater London Returning Officer'

¹⁰ Recommendations made by the Director of Secretariat are included at Appendix 1

Research Services (the electronic counting contractor) said, 'our general comment is that the initial review was very comprehensive and very good'.¹¹ Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield, wrote, 'the report is very thorough, and in general provides a fair reflection of events'. Christopher Cotton, Election Agent for the Green Party, Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate in the London Assembly election, Christopher Pratt, Election Agent for the UK Independence Party, and Victoria Borwick, candidate in the London Assembly election, all wrote to us stating that they broadly agreed with the recommendations made in the Report.

- 3.4 The Director of Secretariat's Report has been a useful source document for the work of this Committee. We broadly endorse the Report's recommendations for planning and management of future GLA elections. In this Report, we consider further some of the issues raised in the Director of Secretariat's initial evaluation, and make additional recommendations arising from our investigation.

4. London Elects

- 4.1 Our predecessor Committee, which investigated and reported on the 2000 GLA elections, made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the leadership and direction of the Greater London Returning Officer (the post was occupied by Robert Hughes in 2000).¹² The 2000 Elections Investigative Committee recommended that, 'the Greater London Returning Officer should set out an action plan for the discharge of his responsibilities in early 2002. This should include setting out the roles of different members of his project team', and that, 'the Greater London Returning Officer should appoint key members of the project planning team in early 2002 and thereafter as the need arises'.¹³ Our investigation of the 2004 combined elections leads us to conclude that the Greater London Returning Officer (who for the 2004 elections was the Greater London Authority's Chief Executive, Anthony Mayer) and the London Elects team were excellent – a vast improvement on the management of the 2000 GLA elections.
- 4.2 The Greater London Returning Officer established a team to plan and manage the combined elections, based from July 2003 in an office in Brewery Square, close to City Hall. Our witnesses were unanimous in their praise for the professionalism, commitment and supportiveness of the London Elects team. For example, Sam Younger, Chair of the Electoral Commission, told us, 'our impression from working with London Elects throughout was that they were ... a highly professional organisation'.¹⁴ This view was echoed by Returning Officers: Gerald Jones, Constituency Returning Officer for Merton and Wandsworth, said, 'the Greater London Returning Officer and London Elects did a first-rate job in successfully co-ordinating an exceptionally complex and difficult election, and the support and information to Constituency Returning Officers was good'.¹⁵ Barry Quirk, Constituency Returning Officer for Greenwich and Lewisham, said, 'the way in which London Elects works is excellent'.¹⁶ Party agents were equally warm in their appreciation of London Elects' efforts. Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent, said, 'Overall, I felt that the London Elects team were very efficient and helpful to work with'.¹⁷

¹¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 20

¹² A summary of recommendations made by the 2000 Elections Investigative Committee is included at Appendix 2 to this Report

¹³ London Assembly Elections Investigative Committee, May 2002, 'Elections and Electorate Engagement'

¹⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 12

¹⁵ Written evidence to the Committee from Gerald Jones, Constituency Returning Officer for Merton and Wandsworth

¹⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 35

¹⁷ Written submission from Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent

- 4.3 We are concerned that the London Elects team had disbanded by the end of August 2004, and the Greater London Authority has no permanent elections team. Anthony Mayer explained, ‘the Greater London Authority is not formally an elections authority, and we have presently disbanded the team and have got an alarmingly small amount of expertise in the GLA about elections’.¹⁸
- 4.4 In the event of a constituency by-election, the management of the election would largely be a matter for the relevant Constituency Returning Officer. If a London-wide Assembly seat became vacant, the next person on the party’s list at the election would be appointed, so there would be no by-election. However, if there were a Mayoral by-election, the Greater London Returning Officer would have to call in outside experts to form a new London Elects team just for that project. We understand that there are contingency plans in place for the event of a by-election, and that there are sufficient funds in the GLA’s reserves to cover the costs (c. £5 million for a Mayoral by-election, and c. £500k for a Constituency by-election). The Mayor is insured, which would at least partly cover the costs of a by-election caused by Mayoral death or illness. Anthony Mayer told us that elections specialists were available on informal call-down agreements,¹⁹ but that it would be necessary to pull together a communications team from scratch for a by-election.
- 4.5 Given that the Greater London Authority provides the funds, accommodation and corporate support to the Greater London Returning Officer in the run-up to GLA elections, we consider that the Authority must make arrangements for a permanent elections capability and adequate capacity within the Authority. The objective would be to ensure that the Authority has within it the core expertise, flexibility and capability to deliver any by-election that may occur between now and 2008, to begin planning for the 2008 elections, to maintain the working relationships that were developed during the two years leading up to June 2004, and to carry forward negotiations with Government to secure the changes to elections legislation that are necessary before the next GLA elections. We would like to see the Greater London Authority developing a role as a centre of excellence in electoral administration in London.
- 4.6 This capability need not take the form of a full-time team of staff – there is no need for a full-scale, permanent London Elects team in an Authority which does not maintain any electoral register and which may not have to deliver elections until 2008. One option would be for a number of existing staff to have elections responsibilities built into their job profiles. Certainly it is not a sustainable position for the Authority to have only one or two permanent officers with elections expertise or formal responsibility for elections.

5. London Elects’ Relationships with the London Boroughs

- 5.1 Much of the administration of the combined elections depended on the cooperation, hard work and dedication of London Borough Returning Officers. (The heavy dependence on working relationships, mutual cooperation and ‘working agreements’ is partly a result of the complex and flawed legislative framework for GLA elections, which we discuss later in this Report.) After the 2000 GLA elections, our predecessor committee (the Elections Investigative Committee) found that

¹⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 15

¹⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 15

communication between the Greater London Returning Officer and the Borough Returning Officers had been 'less than effective'.²⁰

- 5.2 The Director of Secretariat's initial evaluation report on the 2004 elections includes an account of the arrangements that were made for communication with Constituency and Borough Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers.²¹ These included: a monthly newsletter for electoral services managers; a Returning Officer Forum; three electoral services managers' away days; and the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel. London Elects also established ongoing working relationships with the Boroughs. The Director of Secretariat concluded that, 'events and publications aimed at returning officers and electoral services managers (which were effective in ensuring that all the necessary information was available to those who needed it in the boroughs) should be adopted for future elections, with the possible exception of the Returning Officer Forum which, given the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and the Electoral Services Manager away days, may not be necessary'.²²
- 5.3 We invited three Constituency Returning Officers to attend meetings of the Committee: Barry Quirk (Lewisham and Greenwich); Gerald Jones (Merton and Wandsworth); and David Wechsler (Croydon and Sutton), who also acted as Deputy Regional Returning Officer for the European Parliamentary Elections. We received written comments from two Electoral Services Managers. A number of Borough Electoral Services Managers also contributed to the Director of Secretariat's review. All the evidence we have seen shows that working relationships between the Greater London Returning Officer and the Constituency and Borough Returning Officers were effective, within the limits of the legislative framework for the elections.

6. Postal Voting on Request

- 6.1 For the 2004 GLA elections, unlike those in 2000, postal voting was available on request (as a result of national changes to the rules governing postal voting, which were implemented in 2001). 423,488 Londoners took up the opportunity to register for a postal vote, either specifically for these elections or because they had already applied for a standing postal vote.
- 6.2 The Director of Secretariat's report recommended that this Committee should investigate 'the question of what became of the 159,704 postal votes that were not returned to London Boroughs by electors by the 10 June deadline'.²³ 263,784 people voted by post in the 2004 combined elections, equating to a turnout among postal voters (i.e. those registered either for a standing postal vote, or for a postal vote in these elections) of 63.3 per cent, compared to overall turnout in the GLA elections of 37 per cent. Since 2001, when postal voting on request was introduced, there has been a general pattern of higher turnout among postal voters than other electors. In the 2001 general election, turnout was 75.4 per cent, against overall turnout of 55.2 per cent.²⁴ In the Welsh

²⁰ London Assembly Elections Investigative Committee, May 2002, 'Elections and Electorate Engagement', p. 11

²¹ Director of Secretariat's Report, pages 29 to 31

²² Director of Secretariat's Report, recommendation 26, page 31

²³ Director of Secretariat's Report, recommendation 3, page 11

²⁴ Electoral Commission, 'Delivering Democracy – the future of postal voting', August 2004

Assembly elections in 2003, postal voter turnout was 63.4 per cent, compared to overall turnout of 38 per cent.²⁵

- 6.3 Postal voting on request looks set to remain a feature of elections in the UK, and it seems likely that electors will choose this ‘channel’ of voting in increasing numbers. The Electoral Commission has identified clear trends towards increased numbers of electors choosing to register for postal votes.²⁶ Barry Quirk, Constituency Returning Officer for Greenwich and Lewisham, recognised this trend.²⁷ Margaret Lynch, Labour Party Election Agent, said, ‘postal votes are going to be a fact of electoral life and we have to find ways of dealing with it, and dealing with it efficiently’.²⁸ Presumably, at some point, the numbers of electors registering for postal votes will reach a ‘peak’. The consensus seems to be that we are not yet at that point. There are some important lessons to be learned from the 2004 combined elections, if London Returning Officers are to cope effectively with the expected increases in the numbers of postal voters. In the following paragraphs, we first consider electors’ experience of postal voting on request in the 2004 combined elections, and then look at the management and administration of postal voting on request.
- 6.4 The key point arising from our investigation is that the timetable for postal voting on request was unworkable: it was not possible to deliver a high quality service to electors, especially those registered to vote by post, within the constraints of the timetable. Although some improvements could be made to the management and administration of postal voting, in our view these can only go so far towards making the system work effectively and efficiently for electors. We share the opinion of our predecessor Committee, and the Greater London Authority’s Director of Secretariat, that this timetable must be extended by five working days in order to enable the effective and efficient operation of postal voting on request in GLA elections. The following table shows the statutory timetable for GLA elections in 2000 and 2004, and the amendments to the timetable recommended by our predecessor Committee.

Table 1: Statutory election deadlines

Deadline	2000 Deadlines²⁹	Recommended for 2004³⁰	2004 Deadlines³¹	
Notice of Election	E-25	E-32	5 May	E-25
Nominations	E-19	E-26	13 May	E-19
Publication of statement of persons nominated	E-17	E-24	17 May	E-17
Postal voting applications	-	-	2 June	E-6
Election	E	E	10 June	E

²⁵ Electoral Commission, ‘Statutory Report on the Welsh Assembly Elections’, 2003

²⁶ Electoral Commission, ‘Delivering Democracy – the future of postal voting’, August 2004

²⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 26

²⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 5

²⁹ Greater London Authority Elections (No. 2) Rules 2000, Part II, Rule 3

³⁰ London Assembly Elections Investigative Committee, May 2002, ‘Elections and Electorate Engagement’, p. 17

³¹ Greater London Authority Elections (Amendment) Rules 2004, Part II, Rule 3

- 6.5 The Electoral Commission has argued that there should be a standard statutory timetable for all elections in the UK. We understand and support the principle behind this proposal, that there should as far as possible be consistent rules and practice between different types of elections (so that voters know what to expect). However, this timetable presented a specific problem in the 2004 combined elections in London, which can only be addressed by an extension of the timetable.
- 6.6 The GLA elections are the only elections in the UK where the Returning Officer is obliged by law to publish a booklet containing addresses from candidates and information on the elections (although we understand there may be moves for such booklets to be produced for other elections in the UK, such as future European Parliamentary elections). In 2004, the booklet had to be delivered to all 5.2 million registered voters in Greater London. The booklet could obviously not be printed until after the publication of the Statement of Persons nominated, which took place 17 working days before the election. It was a massive challenge to print and deliver the booklets to all 5.2 million electors in London before they voted on 10 June. It proved impossible to deliver the booklet to postal voters before they received and returned their ballot papers. The Director of Secretariat reported that, 'Publication, despatch and delivery of the election booklet was plainly too late in relation to the postal voting deadline – some postal voters received theirs *after* they had already cast their vote (London Elects did investigate various options for minimising this problem)'.³²
- 6.7 A number of witnesses suggested that their experiences of the elections led them to believe that significant numbers of postal voters received their booklets after casting their votes. For example, Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent, said, 'in many instances we found that people had already voted, immediately they received their postal ballots, before receiving their ... booklet'.³³ Most postal voters tend to return their ballot papers either immediately or during the following weekend. It is not possible to establish exactly how many postal voters received and returned their postal ballot papers before receiving the Mayoral address booklet. However, on the basis of the evidence we have seen, we believe that this was a significant problem, caused largely (although not entirely) by an unrealistic timetable.
- 6.8 The Director of Secretariat's report highlights the difficulties experienced by the London Boroughs in processing large quantities of postal vote packs over a short space of time: 'In the context of the resource constraints within which local authorities operate, this was an enormous challenge, even to the most prepared of boroughs. Some boroughs inevitably struggled to achieve the required turnaround, and spoke of almost being brought to their knees; delivering the work that was required, but only just'.³⁴ David Wechsler, Deputy Regional Returning Officer and Constituency Returning Officer for Croydon and Sutton, said, 'the timetable that we all work to ... is impossibly tight. It really is onerous, and even with the most sophisticated new technology there would still be an almost impossible burden on the electoral administrators in the boroughs in turning around applications for postal votes and then dealing with the postal votes themselves'.³⁵
- 6.9 The Director of Secretariat's conclusion on this issue was that the statutory timetable for GLA elections should be extended, to provide an extra working week between the statement of persons

³² Director of Secretariat's Report, paragraph 2.15, page 10

³³ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 2

³⁴ Director of Secretariat's Report, p. 10

³⁵ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 9

nominated and polling day, with other deadlines brought forward by the same amount of time.³⁶ Returning Officers and administrators supported this recommendation. For example, Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing, wrote, 'Agreed. There was insufficient time for postal voters to receive their elections booklet before their postal votes were despatched'.³⁷ Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield, agreed, as did Gerald Jones, Constituency Returning Officer for Merton and Wandsworth.

- 6.10 The timetable for the printing and despatch of postal votes presented problems for some voters, as well as electoral administrators. The late despatch of postal ballot papers (after the 2 June deadline for applications) meant that some of those who had requested postal votes because they were going on holiday did not receive their ballot papers before going away. Christine Bedier, Election Agent for the Conservative Party, was concerned about this issue. She said, 'in certain boroughs they did not do their first issue after the first closing date for existing applications, held everything back, then got totally overwhelmed because of the last-minute applications, and subsequently you had postal ballots being issued on the Friday before the polling day, which would have arrived at the very earliest on the Saturday morning. Most people if they go away on holiday, go away between Saturday to Saturday ... I think you will find that quite a large number were on people's doormats when they came back'.³⁸ Victoria Marsom said, 'because of the lateness of [postal ballot papers] being sent out ... in some cases where people were going away on holiday and had asked for a postal ballot they were leaving before they were posted out. As the proxy vote deadline was earlier than the postal vote, they could not change the instructions. It meant people lost out on their vote'.³⁹
- 6.11 Peter Forrest, a candidate for the Enfield and Haringey London Assembly constituency seat, wrote, 'Many elderly postal voters lost their vote because the timetable failed to take account of the incidence of the Bank Holiday at the end of May and the popularity of this weekend as the jumping off point for holidays Scheduling and resourcing of postal voting arrangements must take account of holiday periods and provide a greater lead-time accordingly'.⁴⁰ Mr Paul Tierney and Ms Nava Adams, from Ealing, also wrote to us to say that they did not receive their postal vote before going away on holiday on 4 June. They wrote to their Returning Officer, who advised them that their papers had been dispatched to them on 1st June.⁴¹
- 6.12 Some candidates and agents agreed with the recommendation that the timetable should be extended, for example Charlie Mansell and Victoria Borwick, candidates in the London Assembly constituency elections, and Christopher Cotton, Green Party Agent in the elections. Other party agents were not so keen, citing the difficulties that would arise for them in managing election expenses if the electoral timetable were extended. Margaret Lynch said, 'I am not particularly sympathetic to the administrative argument that we need to adjust timetables in order to sort out administrative problems ... I think we need to improve the administration of this, rather than extending timetables'.⁴² There are clearly some improvements to be made to the management of postal voting and the Mayoral address booklet, which we discuss below. However, unless the timetable is extended, improvements to administration and management of postal voting and the

³⁶ Director of Secretariat's Report, recommendations 1, page 9

³⁷ Written evidence from Jennie George, ESM, London Borough of Ealing

³⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 5

³⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, pages 2-3

⁴⁰ E-mail from Peter Forrest, candidate in the London Assembly constituency elections (Enfield and Haringey seat)

⁴¹ E-mail from Mr Paul Tierney and Ms Nava Adams

⁴² Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, pages 19-20

Mayoral address booklet will be limited. The timetable is a question of balancing the needs and priorities of administrators, candidates and agents, and of course voters.

Recommendation 1

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to extend the statutory timetable for GLA elections by a week, in order to allow time for the Mayoral address booklet to be distributed ahead of the despatch of postal ballot papers.

- 6.13 Extending the timetable is essential for the efficient and effective management of postal voting (especially as it relates to the publication and delivery of the Mayoral address booklet). However, there is also a need for better project management and administration of postal voting and the Mayoral address booklet. The Director of Secretariat's report lists five factors which contributed to the difficulty of managing postal voting within the statutory timetable: difficulty in predicting the volume of postal votes; influx of applications at the last minute; poor quality of service from Royal Mail; a shortage of postal ballot papers in the boroughs; and the fact that postal ballot packs had to be unfolded in order for the barcode number to be registered – this was unnecessarily time-consuming.⁴³
- 6.14 The late influxes of postal vote applications that were submitted by political parties on behalf of their members clearly caused major problems for some Boroughs' Electoral Services Managers. Gerald Jones told us of the difficulties these late influxes had caused. He said, 'it was not so much the absolute numbers – and indeed if you had planned it properly and you had the numbers right you should have your systems there and your checks there – but I think a number of returning officers were thrown very late in the process because we underestimated in a number of cases the numbers and this was due to political parties indulging in their own active campaign to promote personal votes which were sent to the organiser ... so we got very large batches in late ... which we had not planned for'.⁴⁴
- 6.15 The Director of Secretariat's report recommended that, 'If postal voting on request is to be repeated in the next London elections, the Greater London Returning Officer and the London Boroughs should take preparatory steps to manage the administrative burden on local authority elections teams. If there is no change to rules governing the handling of postal votes by political parties, the Greater London Returning Officer and London Boroughs should put in place plans to anticipate and manage effectively the potential for large late influxes of postal vote applications from political parties. The Greater London Returning Officer should keep this matter under review'.⁴⁵
- 6.16 Gerald Jones agreed with this recommendation. He wrote, 'in this election the combination of unexpectedly higher postal vote volumes with the excessively tight timetable was one of the most significant problems in the run-up period to 10th June. Undoubtedly for 2008 all boroughs need to have plans in place agreed with the Greater London Returning Officer to deal with forecast numbers, allowing for a reasonable contingency margin'.⁴⁶ Barry Quirk said, 'there is no question we have to update, modernise and professionalise the management of [postal voting]'.⁴⁷ It is clear to us that some boroughs significantly underestimated the volume of postal vote applications in the 2004

⁴³ Director of Secretariat's Report, pp. 10-11

⁴⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 28

⁴⁵ Director of Secretariat's Report, recommendation 2, page 9

⁴⁶ Written submission from Gerald Jones, Constituency Returning Officer for Merton and Wandsworth

⁴⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 32

combined elections. We do not understand why this should be the case, given that the boroughs themselves had been engaged in campaigns to promote postal voting.

- 6.17 Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing, argued that there was also a need for more resources for Electoral Services Managers to manage postal voting. She wrote, 'the Fees and Charges Order clerical allowance did in this Authority cover the staff needed to actually issue and open the postal votes but not additional resources to process the large volumes of applications and preparation of postal votes for the issue stage. This needs to be addressed if postal votes on demand continues'.⁴⁸
- 6.18 Margaret Lynch suggested, 'the boroughs that did cope with it and coped with it well were those who, from the close of the first date [the deadline for changes to existing postal vote registrations] began to issue on a daily basis'.⁴⁹ We believe this is an important lesson to be learned from the 2004 combined elections – some boroughs apparently waited until the 2 June deadline before issuing any postal ballot papers. This does not allow any room for the management of last-minute flurries of applications, increases the risk of missing those postal voters who are going on holiday, and places the administrative workload of postal voting at the busiest time in the Electoral Services calendar.
- 6.19 One possible way forward would be for local authorities to outsource the processing, despatch and receipt of postal ballot papers, as was suggested by Gerald Jones.⁵⁰ Barry Quirk said, 'if there is an argument for more centralisation in London or less, I would go for more'.⁵¹
- 6.20 The efficient management of postal voting on request is greatly dependent upon Royal Mail (or whoever else may in the future be awarded the contract) despatching and returning postal ballot papers expeditiously. The Director of Secretariat reported a 'poor quality of service from Royal Mail ... we have heard from several Boroughs that there were indeed unacceptable delays in the delivery of postal ballot forms to electors, in one case of up to a week even within a Borough's area, despite the envelopes being marked as urgent election material. We did find some anecdotal reports of postal votes arriving after 10 June, and of boroughs receiving complaints about non-delivery of postal ballot papers'.⁵²
- 6.21 We contacted electoral services managers at the 32 London Boroughs and the Corporation of London to find out how many postal ballots across London were delayed in the post. We discovered that some 7,000 electors' postal ballot papers were not returned by 10 June. This represents 2.6 per cent of the total postal ballot. Within that overall figure, there is considerable variation in the numbers of late postal votes among the Boroughs (see Appendix 5 for a borough-by-borough breakdown of late returns of postal votes).
- 6.22 We asked the Borough Electoral Services Managers to tell us how many of the late returned postal votes were due to delays in the post, and how many due to electors not posting them before 9th June. The answer to this question proved impossible to find, because large numbers of postal ballots were not franked by the Post Office so it was not possible to tell when they were posted. David Wechsler commented on this problem at the Committee's meeting on 10th November 2004.⁵³

⁴⁸ Written submission from Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing

⁴⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 5

⁵⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 31

⁵¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 32

⁵² Director of Secretariat's Report, paragraph 2.17 (c), page 10

⁵³ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 12

We asked Royal Mail representatives at the same meeting to explain why this might have happened – all mail is usually franked on the day it is collected from letter boxes, so why would large numbers of postal ballot paper envelopes not have been franked? Royal Mail representatives were unable to answer this question at our meeting on 10th November. Royal Mail subsequently sent us the following written response:

In some areas a number of postal votes were extracted from the collection on the night of the 10th June and handed to the Returning Officer in order that these votes be included in the count. So effectively in some areas you received a "final day sweep" of the sorting office which meant even votes posted on the day of the election were forwarded to you for inclusion. Because of the extraction these votes were not franked. In some areas this practice of extraction continued after 10th June with late postal votes identified, pulled out of the system, subsequently not franked, and handed to the RM Area Event Planner who then passed them on to the Returning Officer. In hindsight we appreciate that we should have allowed all late votes to be franked before return to you and will ensure it does happen in the future.⁵⁴

- 6.23 Barry Quirk told the Committee that Lewisham had decided not to use Royal Mail to deliver its postal ballot packs, because Royal Mail could only guarantee an 80 per cent delivery rate (90 per cent on the way to voters, and 90 per cent on the way back). Jennie George told us of her frustration at the apparent failure of Royal Mail to take seriously non-delivered ballot packs. She wrote to us, stating, 'there were concerns, over both the performance of Royal Mail in relation to deliveries of postal votes to electors and their complacent attitude to non delivery: "2-3 per cent non-delivery is within our targets"'.⁵⁵
- 6.24 Individual examples of postal votes that were franked and arrived late show that there were certainly instances of postal votes taking several days (18 days in one case reported by Southwark) to get from the letter box to the Returning Officer. On the other hand, David Wechsler, Deputy Regional Returning Officer and Constituency Returning Officer for Croydon and Sutton, said, 'the service was generally good ... common sense would suggest that a significant proportion of those were probably not posted in good time'.⁵⁶ However, he suggested that, 'we do need a higher level of assurance about the quality of the whole system, every aspect of it, including those parts for which we are responsible as electoral administrators, those parts for which the Government by regulation is responsible and indeed those parts which our colleagues in Royal Mail are responsible for'.⁵⁷
- 6.25 We note with some disappointment the comment made by David Wechsler, that there are few available alternatives to Royal Mail, and the service they offered was often no better, and sometimes much worse.⁵⁸ We asked Royal Mail representatives whether they had made any estimate of the maximum capacity of London's postal system to despatch and deliver postal votes. They were unable to answer the question, but Rachel Winham did tell us about a new product that Royal Mail has been working on, which will aim to deliver a bespoke package for elections materials. This will include a good practice guide, ward sorting of postal votes (via barcode marks on the envelopes), a 'final day sweep' to ensure all postal votes in the system on polling day are delivered, and strong

⁵⁴ Written submission from Royal Mail, 26 November 2004

⁵⁵ Written submission from Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing

⁵⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 10

⁵⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 10

⁵⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 9

project management.⁵⁹ Rachel Winham also acknowledged the need to plan for the fact that most postal voters return their ballot papers on the day they receive them.⁶⁰ We look forward to this package being available for future GLA elections. In the meantime, we wonder whether it would be wise for more Boroughs to consider the solution developed by Lewisham, who arranged delivery of postal votes by local authority staff. There is clearly a need for a much better postal vote delivery and return service, properly coordinated with the delivery of the Mayoral booklet.

- 6.26 The project plan for delivering the Mayoral address booklet included a plan to deliver all the booklets (one to each of the 5.2 million electors in London) by 4th June – two days after the deadline for applications for postal ballot papers. Boroughs began sending out their first batches of postal ballot papers as soon as they were available after the ‘statement of persons nominated’ in the elections was issued by London Elects (it was issued on 17th May, 17 working days before the election, in accordance with the statutory timetable). Despatch of the Mayoral address booklet commenced at around the same time, on 24th May. So there was always going to be overlap between the timetables for delivering the booklet and postal ballot papers to electors, as was acknowledged by John Bennett, Deputy Greater London Returning Officer.⁶¹
- 6.27 Royal Mail was awarded the contract for delivering the Mayoral Address booklet to London’s 5.2 million electors after a competitive tendering process. Royal Mail provided us with their tender document, which formed the basis of the contract between Royal Mail and the Greater London Authority. The service, ‘Standard Walksort 2’, was provided at a cost of 13.312p per item (which, multiplied by 5.2 million, brings the value of the contract to £692,224. The Standard Walksort 2 contract provides for delivery within three working days. The ‘quality of service’ figures included in the contract show that 81.2 per cent of items are delivered by ‘day c’, and 96.8 per cent by ‘day d’. So, about 15 per cent of the booklets despatched by Royal Mail could be expected to take four working days to arrive with electors. A further 3.2 per cent would still not have arrived by that point. We note that this is significantly better than Royal Mail’s delivery rate of polling cards, which is about 50 per cent.⁶²
- 6.28 The contract provided for despatch of the booklets from 24 May to 4 June. Rachel Winham, Partnership Director at Royal Mail, told us that approximately 100,000 booklets were not despatched until 5 June.⁶³ Anthony Mayer reported that there had been ‘little or no complaint about late delivery of the booklets’.⁶⁴ But given the standards of service included in the contract, about 15 per cent of the booklets sent out on Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th June would not have arrived until four working days later – polling day.
- 6.29 There does not seem to have been any significant coordination between the printing and despatch of the Mayoral address booklet and the printing and despatch of postal ballot papers. The two tasks essentially took place in parallel. For example, because of the nature of Royal Mail’s ‘standard walksort’ distribution network, it was not possible to prioritise delivery of the Mayoral address booklet to those registered to vote by post. It was apparently not even possible to find out when a voter in a given postcode was likely to receive their booklet. Because Royal Mail were the only company to bid for the contract to deliver the booklet, London Elects was in a weak bargaining

⁵⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, pages 10 to 11

⁶⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 11

⁶¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 6

⁶² Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 9

⁶³ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 3

⁶⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 4

position to demand a more sophisticated delivery programme, which would have prioritised delivery of the booklet to postal voters.

- 6.30 We consider that there were serious weaknesses in the service offered by Royal Mail in delivering and returning postal ballot papers, and the delivery of the Mayoral address booklet. It is possible to conceive of a time when Royal Mail will not be the only company willing or able to bid for the contract to deliver the Mayoral address booklet. When that happens, the Greater London Returning Officer will be in a more powerful position to negotiate a quicker and more sophisticated service for the delivery of the Mayoral address booklet, enabling those destined for postal voters to be sent out first, and planning for all booklets to be delivered before the deadline for postal voting applications.
- 6.31 Christine Bedier suggested that the copy deadlines for the Mayoral address booklet should be amended so as to expedite its publication.⁶⁵ Obviously this would make only a marginal difference, given that the booklet cannot be finalised until after the close of nominations (19 days before the election). Another possible solution to the problem might be to provide London Boroughs with copies of the booklet, to be sent out in the same package as the postal ballot papers. On the face of it, this seems a simple solution. It would require London Elects and Royal Mail to do one of two things: amend the distribution list for the mass mailing of the booklet, to remove postal voters from the list; or not amend the distribution list, and send out copies to every elector, so sending duplicate copies to postal voters (which would have cost implications, given the increasing numbers of electors who are choosing to vote by post). This solution would place an additional administrative burden on Borough Electoral Services Managers, who were already under the strain of having to process unexpectedly large volumes of postal vote applications during a very short period of time.

Recommendation 2

Better project management of postal voting on request (by London Elects, Royal Mail and the Boroughs) is needed, and an increased standard of service from the delivery contractor (in this case, Royal Mail), to ensure electors receive the Mayoral address booklet before their postal ballot papers, and to maximise the delivery rate of polling cards and the delivery and return of postal ballot papers.

- 6.32 A problem faced by some postal voters is that once they are registered to vote by post, unless they amend their request (by a specific deadline, earlier than the deadline for new postal vote applications), they may not change their minds and vote in person. So, an elector who has mislaid their postal ballot papers, or who has forgotten to post them in time, may not turn up at a polling station and vote there instead (although they may order replacement papers from the relevant Borough, and may return sealed postal ballots to polling stations in the Constituency on polling day, provided the declaration of identity has been completed). This is related to the fact that electors may only vote at their allocated polling station. These rules reflect the lack of an electronic, real-time electoral register in London, so it is not possible to track centrally (within a constituency) which electors have voted.
- 6.33 There are slow moves towards electronic, real-time, electoral registers under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Computerised Online Registration of Electors (CORE) project. But we understand that this project has slipped already, and the Returning Officers we interviewed were not optimistic about its delivery in the immediate future.⁶⁶ We look forward to the achievement of computerised online registration of electors in London, with inter-accessibility between Boroughs in

⁶⁵ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 21

⁶⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 35

each GLA Constituency and the Greater London Returning Officer. A regional computerised electoral register could solve many of the administrative problems involved in GLA elections. For example, party agents could gain access to accurate, or at least up to date, registers without having to approach each individual borough; the printing and despatch of postal votes could be centrally managed in coordination with the Mayoral address booklet; and electors registered to vote by post could choose to vote in person, and could select the most convenient polling station for them (perhaps the one closest to their place of work, rather than their home address). The achievement of CORE is clearly central to any vision of modern electoral administration.

7. Publicity and Awareness-Raising about the Elections

- 7.1 It is formally the responsibility of the Electoral Commission to raise awareness and understanding of elections in the UK. However, to ensure consistency of message, it was agreed that for the 2004 combined elections, London Elects would take the lead in commissioning a publicity campaign about both the Greater London Authority and London European Parliamentary elections (The Electoral Commission made a financial contribution, and there were some joint initiatives). London Elects' budget for this purpose was £1.5 million (plus £1.3 million for the Mayoral Address booklet). The Director of Secretariat's Report includes a detailed account of the publicity and awareness-raising campaign that was undertaken by London Elects.⁶⁷ Our witnesses were generally very positive about London Elects' publicity and awareness-raising campaign.
- 7.2 We received comments and information on publicity and awareness-raising from a number of organisations and individuals. The Electoral Reform Society put forward suggestions for initiatives that could be used in future elections.⁶⁸ Jennie George commented on the usefulness of the London Elects website, which we also thought was impressive and very user-friendly; and Greater London Action on Disability commented on the accessibility of awareness-raising materials and initiatives to Londoners with disabilities. Greater London Action on Disability thought that London Elects' materials were, overall, very good, but highlighted the need for 'easy words' and other accessible formats to be made readily available, and the need to target materials, and images of electors in the publicity campaign, towards those with disabilities and hearing impairments.⁶⁹
- 7.3 We received some fairly negative feedback on the helpline that was set up by the Electoral Commission and London Elects, which echoed some of the criticisms made of the helpline set up in the run-up to the 2000 GLA elections. For example, we heard reports of electors being given incorrect information about the second preference Mayoral vote (some callers were apparently told that they were obliged to use this vote, which is plainly not the case). There are obvious difficulties inherent in the task of setting up a helpline, necessarily staffed by non-experts, to advise electors on complex matters of elections law and practice. Given those difficulties, and the failure so far to find a fully effective way of overcoming them, we doubt whether there would be significant value in setting up a dedicated helpline for future GLA elections. There is no point in setting up a helpline if one cannot guarantee the accuracy of the advice it gives to callers. We would also question the wisdom of a helpline about London elections being located outside London. There may be potential for an e-mail based helpline, which could be more easily controlled, but this would obviously exclude those who do not have access to the Internet.

⁶⁷ Director of Secretariat's Report, pages 33 to 39

⁶⁸ Written evidence from the Electoral Reform Society

⁶⁹ Written evidence from Greater London Action on Disability

- 7.4 The main issue relating to publicity and awareness-raising that arose from our evidentiary hearings was the role of Returning Officers. There is an important distinction to be made between the essentially non-political work of ensuring that electors know there is an election and what it is for, and ensuring that those who wish to vote know how the process works, on the one hand, and the political task of persuading electors to vote. It is for political parties to try to persuade electors to vote. However, there is a serious and important job to be done in making electors aware of the elections, providing them with the information they need about the roles of the bodies to be elected, and explaining how the voting system works.
- 7.5 The Electoral Commission has recommended that there should be a statutory duty upon returning officers to raise awareness and understanding of elections in this country.⁷⁰ We support that recommendation, because it would support an important and valuable aspect of the work done in the first two GLA elections (i.e. the publicity campaigns leading up to each election). We would wish the Greater London Returning Officer in future elections to consider what other channels might be appropriate for communicating information to voters about the elections, such as freepost for candidates. But more broadly, and importantly, such a duty would permeate the administration of elections, serving to focus the minds of electoral administrators and lawyers on the needs and requirements of electors. This recommendation underpins the following section of this Report, which considers the function, format and content of the Mayoral Address booklet, poll cards, voter instructions and ballot papers.

Recommendation 3

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to place a statutory duty upon Returning Officers to raise awareness and understanding of elections. Whilst we make this recommendation in the context of our discussion of Greater London Authority elections, it ought equally to be applied to all other elections in the UK.

8. Voter information, Poll Cards, Voter Instructions, and Ballot Papers

- 8.1 There are four main channels of written communication with voters about Greater London Authority Elections: the Mayoral Address booklet; poll cards; voter instructions (which appear in various different places); and ballot papers. Thus far, only one of these forms of written information has been conceived, designed and produced in a way that is useful and accessible to electors: the Mayoral Address booklet. The booklet is unique to Greater London Authority elections. It was universally well-received as an informative, user-friendly document. There is always room for improvement – we note that the 2004 booklet included for the first time a list of Assembly candidates, which we welcome, but we recognise that public information on the London Assembly elections is weak in comparison to that provided for the Mayoral election. The Electoral Commission's opinion survey in June 2004 found that, whilst 57 per cent of people were satisfied with the amount of information provided on the Mayoral candidates, only 34 per cent were satisfied with the information they received on the London Assembly election. 60 per cent of people said

⁷⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 15

they had too little information on the London Assembly election, compared with 30 per cent on the Mayoral election.⁷¹ We wish to see this balance redressed.

Recommendation 4

The Greater London Returning Officer and the Electoral Commission should redouble their efforts to provide information to electors about the London Assembly elections, in order to satisfy the sixty per cent of people who did not feel they had enough information about the 2004 London Assembly elections.

- 8.2 The remaining three forms of written information for voters have, for decades, been produced by electoral administrators and lawyers, with little consideration apparently given to what voters might want, need, or expect.
- 8.3 Party agents at the Committee's meeting on 3rd November spoke in favour of greater powers of direction for the GLRO to ensure standard practice across London, particularly in relation to polling cards and voter instructions. They argued that since the elections were London-wide, the voter experience should be consistent across the city. Anthony Mayer, John Bennett, David Wechsler, Barry Quirk and Gerald Jones all supported this principle. Barry Quirk said the voter experience should be 'near identical' across London.⁷²
- 8.4 We believe that the following principles should apply to all election materials in Greater London Authority elections:
- a. Electors within London should receive consistent, high quality election materials, regardless of their constituency of residence.
 - b. All election materials should be designed and disseminated so as to provide clear, useful and timely information to electors, and to minimise confusion and misunderstanding about the elections and electoral processes. Market testing and research should be used where appropriate to determine the best design and content of the materials.

Poll Cards

- 8.5 The format and content of polling cards is at the discretion of individual returning officers. This means that in some Boroughs, electors receive attractive, well-designed and thought out, polling cards. In others, the polling card is little more than a formality, which does nothing to attract the attention or interest of those receiving it and, for those who do read it, provides scant information about the elections apart from the address of the polling station. The Committee was told that the format and content of polling cards was at the discretion of Borough Returning Officers; there was some joint working in adjacent boroughs, but no consistency overall. Nicole Smith (Electoral Commission) agreed that consistency would be desirable,⁷³ as did Anthony Mayer, John Bennett, David Wechsler, Barry Quirk, and Gerald Jones. Nicole Smith commented that it might be helpful for the duty to provide information to voters via the polling card to be linked to the objective of raising awareness and understanding of the elections. This proposal also met with general support from our witnesses.

⁷¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 15, and The Electoral Commission, August 2004, The June 2004 elections – the public's perspective, page 48

⁷² Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 36

⁷³ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 17

Recommendation 5

The Government should delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer (in consultation with the Electoral Commission and London Borough Returning Officers) to determine a standard format and content of polling cards for GLA elections. These should be designed so as to encourage turnout and provide useful information to electors (eg map showing the location of polling station, telephone number for queries).

Postal Voting Instructions

- 8.6 A number of those who provided views and information to our investigation pointed to the inconsistency in the quality, format and content of instructions to postal voters. The instructions were not prescribed in Government regulations, and the Greater London Returning Officer did not have power to direct Borough Returning Officers to use a particular format or form of words. Victoria Marsom said, 'different boroughs had different sets of postal voting instructions and envelopes, which was quite confusing. Some were quite simple to use, and others were quite complicated I felt ... I think in future if we could get common use of the same instructions and envelopes in postal voting it would help quite a lot'.⁷⁴
- 8.7 Christine Bedier pointed to a particular problem in the design of one type of envelopes for postal ballots, used by some Boroughs, known as 'one-piece mailers'. These are primarily aimed at ensuring the return of the declaration of identity, without which an otherwise valid vote would be rejected. 'The ballot paper was attached to the declaration of identity, albeit with a perforation, so that we all understand that once the declarations were checked, they were obviously torn away from the ballot paper envelope and put on one side before the ballot paper envelope was subsequently opened. The electors do not understand the system, and there was a lot of concern expressed, 'that means I am not voting in a secret ballot, because of course I am filling in my declaration which is attached to my ballot paper envelope'.⁷⁵ Ms Bedier suggested, 'my view is that the old conventional way that we always did it, where you had a separate declaration, you had a ballot paper and a ballot paper envelope, worked very well, so why reinvent the wheel?'. This is one example of the general problem of electoral materials being designed on the basis of the convenience of administrators, rather than being designed so as to be transparent and comprehensible to voters.
- 8.8 We believe that in all matters to do with Greater London Authority elections, electors should expect and receive a consistent and high standard of service. It is clear that the operation of postal voting on request in London in the combined 2004 elections did not achieve that objective.

Ballot papers

- 8.9 Ballot paper design and content is prescribed in great detail in elections legislation and regulations, as are some voter instructions (such as those appearing in polling stations). The legislation and regulations tend not to change significantly over time, and are based on historic 'expert' opinions about how things should be done. At the Committee's meeting of 20th October, Sam Younger, Chair of the Electoral Commission, said, 'the way in which we go about designing ballot papers ... is not

⁷⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 2

⁷⁵ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 3

particularly voter friendly ... It is odd that the ballot papers are put together by bureaucrats and lawyers, and that the voter and what the voter needs is not at the front of mind. I think there is a lesson there in how we should go about things in the future, and actually start with the voter, try and find ways of getting voters to say what actually helps them most in terms of filling in a ballot paper'.⁷⁶

- 8.10 Asked whether the ballot paper design for the 2004 combined elections was adequate, Nicole Smith, Director of Policy at the Electoral Commission, said, 'on the basis of the statistics in Mr Horsman's report [to the Greater London Returning Officer] and that we have seen, I think it could be suggested it [that the design of the ballot paper] was not [adequate] in some regards – that people did not clearly understand through the ballot paper how they were going to complete the ballot paper'.⁷⁷
- 8.11 Age Concern Tower Hamlets told us that some of their members had found the voting system confusing, in that it was not clear to them whether or not they had to use the second preference Mayoral vote. Valerie Owen, a London voter, said, 'my husband and I voted and we both agreed the sheer number of candidates listed, plus having 2 or 3 ballot papers to complete at the same time, made it quite complicated. We are both intelligent, literate and speak English as a first language – but when we discussed the ballot at home later, we both said we needed to concentrate hard when completing the papers in order not to spoil them!'. Greater London Action on Disability wrote, 'the voting process was complex, and difficult for anyone who did not understand the first and second preference votes etc, let alone someone who needed the form explained because the print was too small!'.⁷⁸
- 8.12 The Greenwich and Woolwich constituency Labour party forwarded to us a resolution passed by the party, based on the experiences of observers at the count on 11th June. The resolution read, 'There were massive and unacceptable levels of spoilt ballot papers in the recent Mayoral and London Assembly elections. These were principally due to design and confusing instructions. Many thousands of votes were not counted [ie not validly cast] through no fault (or choice) of the electors concerned. We call for an urgent reconsideration by the appropriate authorities to prevent any recurrence'.
- 8.13 It is true to say that, officially, 570,328 votes were 'not validly cast' in the GLA elections. However, as was pointed out by the Director of Secretariat in his initial evaluation of the elections, it is difficult to measure accurately the extent to which voters were prevented from casting 'good' votes because they did not understand the voter instructions or the ballot paper.⁷⁹ The regulations governing GLA elections stipulate that votes not validly cast are reported within four categories: 'want of official mark', 'voter discernible', 'voting for more than one candidate', and 'uncertain or blank'. These are the standard categories used for reporting votes not validly cast in elections in the UK. Table 3 shows the numbers of votes not validly cast within each of these four categories in the GLA elections of 2000 and 2004.

⁷⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 9

⁷⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 9

⁷⁸ Written submission from Greater London Action on Disability

⁷⁹ Director of Secretariat's Report, paragraph 3.18, page 17

Table 2: Votes 'not validly cast', 2000 and 2004

	2000		2004	
Mayoral Election – first choice		%		%
Uncertain or blank	12,526	0.7	24,534	1.3
Voting for more than one candidate	24,921	1.4	31,717	1.7
Voter discernible	694	0.0	228	0.0
Want of official mark		0.0	395	0.0
Total votes not validly cast	38,141	2.2	56,874	3.0
Total good votes	1,714,162	97.8	1,863,671	97.0
Total votes cast	1,752,303	100.0	1,920,533	100.0
Mayoral Election – second choice				
No valid first choice	38,141	2.2	56,243	2.9
Uncertain or blank	292,160	16.7	271,117	14.1
Voting for more than one candidate	1008	0.3	1,122	0.1
Total votes not validly cast	331,309	18.9	328,482	17.1
Total good votes	1,420,994	81.1	1591443	82.9
Total votes cast	1,752,303	100.0	1920533	100.0
London-Wide Assembly Member				
Uncertain or blank	73,757	4.2	33,309	1.7
Voting for too many candidates	13,816	0.8	14,575	0.8
Voter discernible	569	0.0	133	0.0
Want of official mark	0	0.0	519	0.0
Total votes not validly cast	88,142	5.0	48,536	2.5
Total good votes	1,659,630	95.0	1,873,166	97.5
Total votes cast	1,747,772	100.0	1,921,702	100.0
Constituency Assembly Member				
Uncertain or blank			113,442	5.9
Voting for too many candidates			4,437	0.2
Voter discernible			133	0.0
Want of official mark			519	0.0
Total votes not validly cast	161,072	9.2	118,535	6.2
Total good votes	1,586,070	90.8	1803,167	93.8
Total votes cast	1,747,142	100.0	1,921,702	100.0
GLA ELECTIONS - TOTALS				
TOTAL UNCERTAIN OR BLANK	378,443	6	442,402	5.8
TOTAL TOO MANY CANDIDATES	39,745	1	51,851	0.7
TOTAL VOTER DISCERNIBLE	1263	0	494	0.0
TOTAL WANT OF OFFICIAL MARK	0	0	1,433	0.0
TOTAL LACK OF VALID FIRST CHOICE	38,141	1	56,243	0.7
TOTAL VOTES NOT VALIDLY CAST	457,592	7	552,423	7.2
TOTAL GOOD VOTES	6,380,856	93	7,131,447	92.8
TOTAL VOTES CAST	6,838,448	100	7,683,870	100.0

- 8.14 The majority of votes recorded as invalid were almost certainly examples of electors choosing (entirely legitimately) not to exercise their second preference vote for the Mayor of London, rather than spoiling their ballot papers because they had misunderstood them. However, the table also shows some evidence of voter confusion in the Mayoral and London Assembly ballots.
- 8.15 Three per cent of Mayoral first preference votes were not validly cast. 31,717 first preference Mayoral votes (1.7 per cent of the total number of votes) were rejected on the basis of voting for too many candidates. Interestingly, this is higher than the number of votes rejected for the same reason in 2000 (24,921) – one might expect this number to fall over time, as electors become more familiar with the voting system and the layout of the ballot papers.
- 8.16 24,534 first preference Mayoral votes were rejected for being unmarked / uncertain, and 56,243 Mayoral second preference votes (2.9 per cent of votes cast) were rejected because there was no valid first choice. Both of these figures represent a marked increase on the figures for the 2000 elections. It is reasonable to assume that many of the 271,117 unmarked / uncertain second preference Mayoral votes were due to voters choosing not to exercise their second preference. However, it is difficult to imagine why thousands of voters would choose not to exercise their first preference, whilst exercising their second preference. These rejected votes are likely to be attributable to voter confusion arising largely from poor ballot paper design and inadequate voter instructions.
- 8.17 The table also shows a surprisingly large number of rejected votes in the London Assembly elections. 33,309 votes were rejected for being uncertain or blank in the London-wide Assembly Member ballot, and 113,442 in the Constituency Assembly Member ballot. It seems implausible that so many voters would choose to vote for one sort of Assembly Member but not another. A total of 19,102 London Assembly Member votes were rejected because of voting for too many candidates.
- 8.18 John Bennett offered what seems to us to be a credible explanation for the numbers of unmarked / uncertain ballots in the second preference Mayoral and London Assembly elections. He suggested that voters had ‘drifted’ towards the right-hand column on the ballot papers, omitting to vote in the left-hand column. He said, ‘potentially up to 170,000 voters may have, on the two ballot papers where there were two votes available, drifted to the right hand side, and either omitted the constituency member or the Mayoral first choice’.⁸⁰
- 8.19 Related to this is the mistake made by a total of 51,851 voters of voting for more than one candidate in a single column of the ballot paper. David Wechsler told us, ‘there were a very large number of papers, certainly in my constituency, where the elector had put two votes in the same column, clearly not understanding the way in which the paper was arranged in terms of the columns. I think that was an accident that had been designed in, frankly, owing to very poor ballot paper design’.⁸¹
- 8.20 Figures published by the House of Commons Library, showing the numbers of spoilt ballot papers within each statutory category from 1964 to 2001, show that the percentage of spoilt ballot papers has consistently been less than half of one per cent in general elections throughout that period (ranging from 0.13% in both 1974 general elections, to 0.38 per cent in 1979 and 2001). Interestingly, the House of Commons Library paper clearly shows that there have been higher

⁸⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 10

⁸¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 24

numbers of spoilt ballot papers in years where local elections were combined with general elections (1979, 1997 and 2001, when the percentage of spoilt ballot papers was 0.38%, 0.30%, and 0.38 per cent respectively). In years when general elections were not combined with any other election, the percentage of spoilt ballot papers ranged from 0.13 per cent to 0.18 per cent.⁸² In the Greater London Authority elections of 10 June 2004, spoilt ballot papers amounted to 7.2 per cent of total ballot papers. Clearly, we are talking about a completely different order of magnitude of spoilt ballot papers in GLA elections, when compared to general elections. We can only assume that this is due to the complex nature of the voting system for the Mayor and London Assembly, the novelty of the system, and a failure to communicate (through the format and content of voter instructions and ballot papers) effectively to voters how to cast their votes.

- 8.21 The Director of Secretariat recommended that, 'The Government should delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer, in consultation with the Electoral Commission, for voter instructions and ballot paper design, and this delegation should be in place in good time before the 2008 elections'.⁸³ Given the unique and complex nature of Greater London Authority elections, and the evident failure to date of the Government to come up with ballot papers and voter instructions that do the job effectively, we fully support this recommendation.
- 8.22 It is crucially important that in exercising a new power to determine the design and wording of ballot papers and voter instructions, the Greater London Returning Officer should conduct market testing and research, so as to move away from the era of ballot papers and voter instructions being designed by experts, for experts. Barry Quirk suggested that extensive and detailed market research should be done to find the clearest way of laying out the ballot paper and voter instructions from the point of view of voters.⁸⁴ Gerald Jones agreed, as did David Wechsler, who said that this view reflected the consensus of returning officers in London. Party agents were unanimous in their support, too.
- 8.23 The Electoral Reform Society wrote to us, stating, 'the Electoral Reform Society was critical of the Government's decision not to allow the Greater London Returning Officer discretion to alter the wording on ballot papers to give voters more information about the voting system in use and to instruct them on how to cast a valid vote. In particular, the Society would have liked to have seen a clear statement warning against casting both Mayoral preferences for the same candidate'.⁸⁵
- 8.24 Suggestions for improved ballot paper design and voter instructions include: the use of separate ballot papers for the two separate London Assembly elections; the use of one column for the Mayoral ballot, in which voters are required to mark their preferences '1' and '2'; and clearer wording of the instructions on ballot papers.
- 8.25 We understand that the Government did consult the Electoral Commission on the design of the ballot papers for the GLA elections, but that the Electoral Commission was required to respond within a matter of days, and in any event not all of their comments were taken on board.⁸⁶ The Greater London Returning Officer should ensure that the Electoral Commission is fully involved in the development of new ballot papers and voter instructions for future GLA elections.

⁸² House of Commons Library, Research Paper 04/61, 28 July 2004, UK Election Statistics: 1918-2004, page 18

⁸³ Director of Secretariat's Report, Recommendation 6, page 13

⁸⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 38

⁸⁵ Written submission from the Electoral Reform Society

⁸⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 8

Recommendation 6

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer (in consultation with the Electoral Commission) for the design of the ballot paper and the wording of voting instructions, wherever they appear (e.g. poll cards, booklet, notices in polling booths, ballot papers, absent vote papers). In exercising this duty, the GLRO should commission market research to identify the clearest, most accessible designs, explanations and voting instructions so as to minimise voter confusion.

Recommendation 7

The Government should amend elections legislation, by May 2007, so that the declaration of results sheets are required to make clear the distinction between 'blank' and 'uncertain' ballot papers. This is particularly important for GLA elections, in which the double-vote voting system produces large numbers of unmarked / uncertain ballot papers.

Electoral Administration

- 8.26 The efficient administration of Greater London Authority elections depends on Constituency and Borough Returning Officers fulfilling the roles that are traditionally, as well statutorily, their responsibility. For 2004, the Greater London Returning Officer had greater and clearer powers of direction over Constituency Returning Officers than was the case in 2000. The main issue to arise from the 2004 experience is the lack of power to direct Borough Returning Officers. The Director of Secretariat's report raised the question of whether the Greater London Returning Officer's power of direction should be extended to include Borough Returning Officers, as well as Constituency Returning Officers.⁸⁷
- 8.27 There are three main arguments in favour of powers of direction for the Greater London Returning Officer over Constituency Returning Officers, and for Constituency Returning Officers over Borough Returning Officers. First, there should be consistently high standards across London in the provision of elections materials, advice and information (as discussed in the previous section), and in order for this to be effective there is a need for the Greater London Returning Officer to have the power to determine and enforce those standards; secondly, the administration of GLA elections is too heavily reliant on 'working agreements' between Constituency and Borough Returning Officers, leaving the process vulnerable to the impact of any breakdown of those agreements; and, thirdly, there is inconsistency of interpretation of the law, such that Mayoral and London-wide Assembly candidates have to deal with different versions of 'the rules' in different Boroughs.
- 8.28 The experience of 2004 showed the problems that can arise when the working agreements between Constituency and Borough Returning Officers break down: the Returning Officer for Hackney refused to administer postal voting for the GLA elections, arguing that this was the responsibility of the GLA Constituency Returning Officer. Whilst this problem did not have major ramifications for the administration of the elections (other than within that constituency), it illustrates a general problem which has the potential to cause much more significant difficulties.
- 8.29 Party agents identified some specific areas of inconsistency in practice among the boroughs. For example, some boroughs were apparently reluctant and / or slow to provide the electoral roll to agents, even though the agents were entitled to receive it.⁸⁸ Christine Bedier explained that this

⁸⁷ Director of Secretariat's Report, p. 29, para 9.5

⁸⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 18

problem was magnified by the late publication of an up-to-date electoral register by one Borough 'at the ninth hour'.⁸⁹ Gerald Jones pointed out that this problem could be addressed by the CORE project, discussed earlier in this report, which could provide a single, computerised electoral register for London. He acknowledged, however, that even within the current system, where each Borough is responsible for and holds its own register, there could have been better coordination to deal with internal distribution and communication, so that agents could view registers at a single, central point (such as the London Elects office) rather than having to obtain each register separately from 33 Boroughs.⁹⁰

- 8.30 A number of parties employed a single agent for all their candidates. We heard that there was inconsistency among the boroughs about whether or not it was acceptable for a registered agent to live outside the constituency or neighbouring constituencies. For example, Margaret Lynch described how the Director of the London Labour Party, who had used the Party's headquarters address, was told by some Boroughs that her papers could not be accepted because she was not registered at an address within or adjacent to the constituency.⁹¹ Victoria Marsom, as the agent for all Liberal Democrat candidates in the elections, told us she had come up against the same problem.⁹² Christopher Cotton said, 'from the point of view of an agent, the most unnecessary difficulties were caused in gathering nomination signatures by the fact that a separate electoral roll had to be obtained for each borough for the purpose of finding ten signatures ... the electoral rolls obtained for two boroughs were out of date. I was informed of one of these less than 24 hours before handing in of nominations, and the other when one set of signatures was rejected. I would strongly support a centralised London Electoral Roll to be maintained in future'.⁹³
- 8.31 Party agents also spoke of the difficulties associated with having to collect and deliver nomination forms from and to all 14 GLA constituencies, especially where one agent was acting for all candidates. Victoria Marsom suggested that the nomination papers for constituency Assembly candidates ought to have been available from London Elects, rather than having to go to each separate constituency to obtain the papers.⁹⁴ Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, made the same suggestion.⁹⁵
- 8.32 Anthony Mayer described the lack of powers of direction over Borough Returning Officers as a 'hole' in elections legislation, which needed to be filled.⁹⁶ Gerald Jones (Merton & Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer) told the Committee that there was a muddled division of accountabilities, which caused problems in the management of the count, and, in some cases, difficulties in managing postal voting.⁹⁷ Barry Quirk (Greenwich & Lewisham Constituency Returning Officer) said that there should be clearer powers of direction from the GLRO to Constituency Returning officers, and new powers of direction for Constituency Returning Officers over their partner Borough Returning Officers.⁹⁸ David Wechsler agreed, but pointed out that there should be flexibility within standard rules and practice to allow Returning Officers to cater to local

⁸⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 18

⁹⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 23

⁹¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 10

⁹² Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 10

⁹³ Written submission from Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent

⁹⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 10

⁹⁵ Written submission from Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager

⁹⁶ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 18

⁹⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 23

⁹⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 23

circumstances.⁹⁹ The law should enable the Greater London Returning Officer to set common standards for the interpretation of elections legislation, so that the experience of candidates in GLA elections is consistent across London. This would, of course, place the burden of responsibility for those directions on the Greater London Returning Officer, which has implications for the level of risk associated with the role.

Recommendations 8 and 9

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, to provide a general power of direction for the Greater London Returning Officer to direct Constituency Returning Officers to perform functions in support of Greater London Authority Elections.

The Government should introduce legislation, in time to take effect by May 2007, providing Constituency Returning Officers with powers of direction over Borough Returning Officers concerning matters that Borough Returning Officers traditionally or statutorily perform.

9. Arrangements for the Count

Electronic Counting

- 9.1 The Electoral Commission has published a review of the operation of electronic counting in London in the 2004 combined elections.¹⁰⁰ The Director of Secretariat's review also considered the matter. Overall, the 2004 experience of electronic counting was immeasurably better than the 2000 election. The system had been improved, providing greater accuracy and speed, and some of the lessons from 2000 seem to have been learned and applied in 2004. For instance, the Greater London Returning Officer's decision to start the count at 8.30am on Friday 11th June was widely welcomed, not only by electoral staff, but also by most of the political party agents.¹⁰¹ We see no reason to change this decision for 2008, given the scale and complexity of the count operation.
- 9.2 The only significant problem with the 2004 system was the breakdown of the communications system. Plasma screens had been set up at each count venue, which were supposed to show the overall progress of the count. In the event, the system did not work. Tony Lee, Director of DRS Data & Research Services, explained, 'there was a communication problem when we started to transfer the data around all 14 counting centres. If you were watching when we first started counting, the plasma displays were showing correct information and it gradually got slower and slower to a point where it was not useful, so we turned them off. We have identified the error that caused that and would make sure that it did not happen again'.¹⁰²
- 9.3 Some of those who contributed to our investigation raised questions about whether sufficient measures were in place to guarantee accuracy of the count. Victoria Marsom suggested that the testing of the systems that was built into the contract was not sufficiently rigorous – it involved examining the testing scheme used by the makers of the machines, rather than actually testing the machines themselves.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 18

¹⁰⁰ The Electoral Commission, December 2004, 'Electronic Counting at the London Elections, June 2004'

¹⁰¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 15

¹⁰² Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 26

¹⁰³ Written submission from Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent

- 9.4 There was, as in 2000, some frustration about the lack of up-to-date information during the count. In a manual count, it is possible for those observing the count to see mounting stacks of ballot papers and gain a rough idea of how the count is progressing. Electronic counting removes that element of the count. The Director of Secretariat recommended that, 'elections legislation should be changed to allow indicative running totals for individual candidates to be displayed during an electronic count, providing an equivalent of the mounting piles of ballot papers that are visible during manual counts'.¹⁰⁴ The feedback we received on this recommendation was overwhelmingly positive.¹⁰⁵

Recommendation 10

The Government should introduce legislation, by May 2007, to allow running indicative totals for individual candidates to be shown during an electronic count, to provide an equivalent of the mounting piles of ballot papers that are visible during a manual count.

Count Venues

- 9.5 For the 2004 combined elections, there were eleven count venues, two of which hosted the count for two or more constituencies. Alexandra Palace was the venue for four constituency counts: Barnet and Camden; Brent and Harrow; Enfield and Haringey; and North East (Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest). Olympia hosted two constituency counts: West Central (Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster), and Ealing and Hillingdon. The views expressed to us were very positive about arrangements at the two multi-constituency count centres.
- 9.6 The Director of Secretariat commented in his Report that, 'the multi-constituency counts at Alexandra Palace and Olympia worked well, and there seems to be some scope for increasing the number of multiple count centres in future elections. There are potential efficiency savings from such an approach, and it is reportedly easier to identify appropriate venues'.¹⁰⁶ Tony Lee, Managing Director of DRS Data & Research Services plc, agreed with this analysis. He said, 'I think all of the super centres ... seemed to work extremely well'.¹⁰⁷ He confirmed that from DRS's point of view it is easier to 'find larger venues in London than to find smaller venues to hold a constituency level count'.¹⁰⁸ We asked Tony Lee for his view on whether cost savings would be achieved if all the constituency counts were held in one large venue. He replied, 'It is difficult to put a value on it at this point. I think it is more the ease of running the whole thing, the technical support'. When pressed, he said, 'It would be enough, I think, to justify the decision'.¹⁰⁹ Tony Lee indicated the amount saved would be at least £50,000.¹¹⁰
- 9.7 Party agents supported the idea of holding the 14 constituency counts at a smaller number of 'super-count' venues. For example Victoria Marsom said, 'multi-count venues we thought worked fine. We found it easier to get the more experienced of our people there so they were there to support teams. It was easier to do that, and there was more support for them because it was a

¹⁰⁴ Director of Secretariat's Report, recommendation 12, page 17

¹⁰⁵ For example, written submissions from Jennie George, Gerald Jones, Christopher Cotton, Charlie Mansell.

¹⁰⁶ Director of Secretariat's Report, paragraph 3.7, page 15

¹⁰⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 24

¹⁰⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 24

¹⁰⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 25

¹¹⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 25

multi-count rather than a single GLA area.¹¹¹ Christopher Cotton agreed, stating that, 'it makes sense, if large venues are used, to use them for as many constituencies as can travel to the venue easily'.¹¹²

- 9.8 Gerald Jones argued that whilst it might be possible to organise fewer, larger count venues, there were 'countervailing problems' to do with the security of ballot papers being transported from the polling station to the count centre, the lack of control of returning officers over arrangements (including security arrangements) at the venue, and employing local staff to travel to the count centre. He suggested that the management of risks was much easier at single constituency counts.¹¹³ Barry Quirk agreed that there are 'very complicated logistical things about getting things on vans and making sure the van drivers are not doing it on their own', but he said, 'you have to be assured of that, and the parties need to be assured ... of the transportation of ballot papers, but it can be done'.¹¹⁴
- 9.9 Anthony Mayer said that London Elects had conducted a cost-benefit analysis of holding counts at one central venue. His conclusion had been that the benefits did not outweigh the costs. He pointed out that had he pursued this course in 2004, he would have had to book the venue a year in advance, and would have incurred large cancellation costs when the date of the election was moved to 10 June (in order for the GLA elections to be combined with the European Parliamentary elections). Anthony Mayer suggested that the savings that could be achieved, from DRS's point of view, by holding all the counts in one venue would be of the order of £50,000. Against this, there would be additional costs associated with the hire of a large venue, the transportation of ballot papers, paying staff to travel to the venue, and security. He pointed out that local count centres were often provided at 'marginal cost'.¹¹⁵
- 9.10 For 2004, there was a significant risk that the date of the election would be moved once the decision was finally taken to combine the Greater London Authority and European Parliamentary elections. Under those circumstances, it seems reasonable to take the view that the hire of one central venue would carry too much risk. However, there is no prospect of such a combination before 2024. In that context, the balance of the costs and benefits of holding the count at a single venue may be quite different.

Recommendation 11

The count for future GLA elections should, subject to economic considerations, be held at one multi-constituency count centre.

Recount

- 9.11 In elections where there is a regional returning officer (i.e. European Parliamentary and Greater London Authority Elections), the count hierarchy is structured so that recounts can only be ordered at a local level, which, in the case of Greater London Authority elections, is the GLA constituency. The Greater London Returning Officer does not have the power to order a London-wide recount of

¹¹¹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 12

¹¹² Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page

¹¹³ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 34

¹¹⁴ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 35

¹¹⁵ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 20

the results – the law is structured in such a way as to prevent this from being possible. Once results are declared at Constituency level, those results stand. Stand-by facilities were provided in 2004 in case a constituency recount should be ordered,¹¹⁶ but in the event those facilities were not needed. It is possible to conceive of there being large differences between candidates and parties within individual constituencies, which nonetheless overall add up to a very close result or loss of deposit. Under such circumstances, any candidate wishing to request a recount would have to make that request to each individual Constituency Returning Officer, and each of those officers would have the right to make their own independent decision as to whether there are reasonable grounds on which to order a recount. We consider that this is an unworkable arrangement, and that legislation should be introduced to enable the Greater London Returning Officer, in specific circumstances, to order a London-wide recount in Greater London Authority elections.

Recommendation 12

The Government should introduce legislation to enable the Greater London Returning Officer to order a recount in Greater London Authority elections.

City Hall

- 9.12 City Hall, the home of the Greater London Authority, was the venue for the calculation and declaration of the London-wide results in the 2004 GLA and European Parliamentary elections. The Greater London Returning Officer advises us that the decision to use it as the venue had all-party support. However, there are some clear lessons to be learned if City Hall is to be used in this way in the future.
- 9.13 Party agents spoke unfavourably about the accommodation provided for candidates and agents at City Hall. Our discussions with them highlighted the fact that candidates and agents value space, and ability to move around easily, above privacy. Party agents also request that results should be made available as print-outs as they are declared (printouts of results were not provided at City Hall in 2004).
- 9.14 There are some practical limitations relating to the layout of offices at City Hall, which make it difficult to use it as a venue for a high-profile, high security event such as the central calculation and declaration of election results. The open-plan multi-floor layout means that it is not possible to allow candidates and agents to wander freely through the building. There is not an enormous amount of suitable space on the lower ground floor to accommodate candidates, agents, staff and the media. Security is difficult to manage. This being the case, it might be worth considering whether, for future GLA elections, another venue should be used for the calculation and declaration of results, possibly the actual count venue

Recommendation 13

Subject to constraints of space and security considerations, the Greater London Returning Officer should provide better arrangements for candidates and agents –there is a need for shared facilities to be accessible and for those attending the declarations to be able to move around the building easily. Printouts of results declared at City Hall should be made available immediately after each declaration.

¹¹⁶ Director of Secretariat's Report

- 9.15 Party agents were under the impression that the Greater London Returning Officer had delayed the announcement of a number of constituency results, in order to maximize the dramatic effect of the announcement of London-wide results.¹¹⁷ Anthony Mayer said that the last two constituency results were indeed delayed, but that this was not in any way related to the excitement of the event. He said, 'I did not find the evening of the 11 June in any way entertaining, or a media event. What I wanted to do was to get the results out correctly as quickly as I could. My only motive was ... a set of correctly announced results, and that is what I achieved'.¹¹⁸
- 9.16 The results from two constituencies were held back for about 20 minutes, whilst final calculations of the London-wide results took place. Anthony Mayer argued, 'what I did not want was ... a shambles with people either making the right calculations or even the wrong calculations in regard to the fact that d'Hondt is a complicated, iterative calculation, and I wanted to own the calculation of the results'.¹¹⁹
- 9.17 Results of the GLA elections at ward level were released to Borough Returning Officers, some weeks after 10 June. In future elections, it would be useful if results at ward level were released immediately after the main results. In order to ensure that these results are an accurate reflection of voting patterns, the electronic counting contract should include the disaggregation of postal vote results at ward level. We understand from Sonya Douglas, from DRS, that this would be technically possible.¹²⁰

10. Elections Legislation

- 10.1 Elections legislation is extremely complex, residing in a range of Acts of Parliament and statutory Orders and Regulations, all of which are intricately inter-dependent. The table on the following page (Table 3) shows the main pieces of legislation that governed the 2004 combined elections in London.
- 10.2 There is a need for an overhaul of elections legislation in this country, as a foundation for any electoral modernisation programme. The current legislative framework is creaking, overly complex and flawed. This is no basis on which to proceed towards multi-channel elections, which will bring with them a whole raft of new and complicated electoral issues, as has been the case with the introduction of electronic counting.
- 10.3 For the 2004 combined election in London, the enabling legislation was enacted very late in the day. This had an impact on the costs of the elections, and the ability of the administrators efficiently to manage the project. The Director of Secretariat's report recommended that, 'The Greater London Returning Officer should make representations to the Government on the need for elections legislation, rules and financial guidance to be in place in good time before each election'.¹²¹ We endorse that recommendation.

¹¹⁷ Transcript of Committee meeting, 3 November 2004, page 13

¹¹⁸ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 22

¹¹⁹ Transcript of Committee meeting, 10 November 2004, page 22

¹²⁰ Transcript of Committee meeting, 20 October 2004, page 27

¹²¹ Director of Secretariat's Report, Recommendation 24, page 28

Table 3: Legislation governing the 2004 combined elections in London

Legislation	Date	What it does
The Local Elections (Ordinary Day of Election 2004) Order 2004 (SI 2004/222)	Made 22 March 2004, came into force 23 March 2004	Moved the day of the election back from May to June.
The Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004	Made 22 March 2004, came into force 23 March 2004	In the main set out the functions of Constituency Returning Officers at the combined election and mechanism for paying fees and charges; dealt with the details concerning the combination; and substituted into the European elections rules (below) the modifications for electronic counting to be used in London in 2004.
The European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 2004	Made on 2 March 2004, came into force 23 March 2004	Set out in full the detailed elections regulations applying to the European Elections (which previously had been the UK Parliamentary rules as adapted), covering the whole gamut of issues including absent voting, election expenses etc.
The GLA Elections (Amendment) Regulations 2004	Made 4 February 2004, came into force 1 March 2004	Substituted the Mayoral, Constituency and London wide Assembly election rules into the 2000 GLA election rules as well as the modifications for electronic counting.

- 10.4 The Director of Secretariat made a number of recommendations for changes to elections legislation, and the Greater London Returning Officer has commenced discussions with Government on similar proposals. We broadly endorse those proposals (attached at Appendix 1).

Recommendation 14

The Government should ensure that all legislation, rules and regulations for GLA elections are enacted so as to take effect at least a year before the start date of the elections.

11. Budget for Future Mayoral and London Assembly Elections

- 11.1 The total budget for the elections was £20.7 million - £14.25m from the GLA, and £6m to £6.5m from the Government. This amounts to a cost of £10.77 per voter (1,921,702 people voted in the elections), or £2.30 per vote cast (there were 9,016,896 'good' votes cast, with each elector potentially casting up to five votes: two for the Mayor; two for the London Assembly; and one for the European Parliament). The Director of Secretariat's report includes consideration of financial issues in relation to the elections. Our key point on these matters is that there is a need for a government indemnity to cover the costs of a re-run of the Mayoral elections in the event of the death of a candidate after the closing date for nominations. The Director of Secretariat's review included discussion of the fact that a by-election would have been necessary if a Mayoral or Constituency Assembly Member candidate had died between the date of nomination and polling

day.¹²² For 2004, there was no indemnity from the Government to cover the costs of that eventuality, and no commercial insurance could be secured. Indeed it was not clear what the costs would be.

Recommendation 15

The Government should provide an indemnity to cover the risks associated with GLA elections that are not covered by reasonably priced commercial insurance, especially the possibility of a re-run of the Mayoral election upon the death of a candidate.

12. Future Mayoral and London Assembly Elections

- 12.1 The Electoral Commission has recommended¹²³ that the 2008 GLA elections should be a 'multi-channel' pilot, subject to successful piloting in local elections in 2006. There was some discussion of this proposal at the Committee's first meeting, on 20th October 2004. Key points arising from that discussion were:
- The proposal for a 2008 multi-channel pilot is subject to successful smaller-scale pilots in the meantime – a phased approach, rather than 'scaling up' too far too fast as happened with all-postal voting pilots;
 - The Government is due to publish a strategy document on electoral modernisation early in 2005; and
 - Electronic voting should include internet voting as well as voting machines in polling stations / kiosks – voting machines alone do not provide significant benefits.
- 12.2 Barry Quirk told the Committee that Lewisham had done some work with its Citizens' Panel, and had found that people wanted a choice of methods for voting, in much the same way as they have a choice of ways to pay their utility bills. Barry Quirk argued that for electronic voting to work, there needed to be integrity between and within systems; no system had yet been designed with sufficient encryption, integrity and safeguarding. Whilst there had been a successful e-enabled election in India, it was likely that an e-enabled election in London would be the target of much more sophisticated and determined hackers.
- 12.3 Gerald Jones argued that any GLA electoral pilot would be more costly and complex than any other, because of the complexity of the electoral systems. Multi-channel voting with multi-system elections might be too complicated. He suggested that the GLA should wait until cost, audit and probity issues had been resolved through pilots in more straightforward elections. However, John Bennett made the point at the 20th October meeting that if the GLA elections in 2008 were to be a multi-channel pilot, work would have to begin now. This would have to be based on an assumption of successful local pilots in 2006, but with the provision to pull the plug on a multi-channel GLA election in 2008 if the 2006 pilots were not successful.
- 12.4 The aspiration put forward by the Electoral Commission, that voters should be able to choose between a variety of voting methods (which should include traditional voting in person at a polling

¹²² Director of Secretariat's Report, page 23

¹²³ The Electoral Commission, August 2004, 'Delivering Democracy? The future of postal voting'

station), is something we can all support in principle. But the benefits of modernisation must not be pursued at the cost of security or privacy. It is not good enough for new voting systems to be 'as secure as' traditional methods. Voters need to be assured that their votes cannot be stolen or traced, that their votes will be accurately counted, and that the vulnerability of the system to hacking, sabotage or fraud is minimised.

Recommendation 16

We are not convinced that the 2008 Greater London Authority elections would be an appropriate vehicle for a multi-channel pilot, because GLA elections are the most complex elections to take place in the UK, and systems that provide the requisite levels of security, integrity and reliability are not likely to be available, and fully tested for the scale of implementation, in time for a successful London-wide election.

Under no circumstances should there be a 2008 Greater London Authority election multi-channel pilot unless there have been successful borough election multi-channel pilots in 2006.

Appendix 1: Recommendations made by the Director of Secretariat

The following recommendations were made in a report by the GLA Director of Secretariat, commissioned by the Greater London Returning Officer. Copies of the full report are available on request from Janet Hughes, Senior Scrutiny Manager, telephone 020 7983 4423, e-mail janet.hughes@london.gov.uk

Greater London Returning Officer

Elections legislation

The Greater London Returning Officer should make representations to the Government on the need for elections legislation, rules and financial guidance to be in place in good time before each election. (Recommendation 24, page 28)

Postal Voting

If postal voting on request is to be repeated in the next London elections, the Greater London Returning Officer and the London Boroughs should take preparatory steps to manage the administrative burden on local authority elections teams. If there is no change to rules governing the handling of postal votes by political parties, the Greater London Returning Officer and London Boroughs should put in place plans to anticipate and manage effectively the potential for large late influxes of postal vote applications from political parties. The Greater London Returning Officer should keep this matter under review. (Recommendation 2, page 9)

Ballot paper and voting instructions

To the extent that any mis-voting in the 2004 election was a result of misunderstanding, the GLRO should be asked to trial ballot papers / elections notices and instructions, and make any changes he sees fit, subject to the agreement of the Government and the Electoral Commission. (Recommendation 14, page 18)

E-counting contract

The Greater London Returning Officer should compile a checklist of clauses to be included in any future electronic counting contract, on the basis of lessons learned in 2004. This should include the provision of a break-down of results by ward. (Recommendation 7, page 14)

Count Venues

The Greater London Returning Officer should conduct a cost/benefit analysis of multi-constituency count centres, and the results of this should be reported to the London Assembly's Elections Review Committee for its consideration. (Recommendation 8, page 15)

The Greater London Returning Officer should, in consultation with the electronic counting contractor and the London boroughs, compile a checklist for arrangements at count venues. This should include: appropriate lighting, power supply and communications links, availability of chairs and tables, and the provision of refreshments for count staff. (Recommendation 9, page 15)

For future GLA elections, if City Hall is used as a venue, the Greater London Authority Chief Executive should consider whether staff should be allowed to work as usual in the building until 1pm. (Recommendation 10, page 16)

The Greater London Returning Officer and the Greater London Authority should review what accommodation should be provided for Mayoral candidates during the count for future Greater London Authority elections. (Recommendation 11, page 16)

Head of London Elects

For future elections, there should be a full-time head of London Elects, possibly the Deputy Greater London Returning Officer, with responsibility for both the operations and communications sides of the elections team. (Recommendation 22, page 26)

Working with Constituency and Borough Returning Officers

The Greater London Returning Officer should place arrangements to ensure effective communication between the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and London's returning officers and electoral services managers. (Recommendation 25, page 30)

Events and publications aimed at returning officers and electoral services managers (which were effective in ensuring that all the necessary information was available to those who needed it in the boroughs) should be adopted for future elections, with the possible exception of the Returning Officer Forum which, in the context of Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and the electoral services manager away days, may not be necessary. (Recommendation 26, page 31)

Training and Guidance

The Greater London Returning Officer should consider whether a mock-up of a count should be set up within London in the two months before the next GLA election. This would enable more count staff to take part in count walk-throughs, a training method which proved to be very effective for the 2004 election count. (Recommendation 27, page 33)

A training programme similar to that developed and delivered by London Elects in 2004 (which was widely commended as outstanding) should be implemented for the 2008 elections, subject only to the outcome of reviews of the programme by Deloitte and the Electoral Commission. (Recommendation 28, page 33)

Greater London Authority

Elections Budget & Expenditure

The overall budget and its component elements should be agreed as early on in the project as possible.

The budget should be kept under regular review and its requirements considered as part of the Authority's budget and business planning process.

Options for dealing with Mayoral and Constituency by-elections should be assessed and built into future budget and business plans.

The terms of any joint agreements with the Government or other third party should be agreed in writing before the Authority enters any commitments.

Action should be taken to encourage the London boroughs to submit timely returns in respect of elections expenses.

The roles and responsibilities of project members and the reasons for various controls and decision making processes should be clearly communicated to all project members. (Recommendations 15 to 20, page 23)

The GLA should establish plans now for what human resources are needed, and when, in order to begin planning for the 2008 elections; ensure London's voice is heard in debates on elections policy and practice; take forward negotiations with the Government about proposals for legislative change; provide for the eventuality of a Mayoral or Constituency Member by-election, or for a referendum in which the Chief Executive of the Greater London Authority may be appointed as a regional counting officer. (Recommendation 23, page 27)

Government

Elections timetable

The deadline for candidates' nominations should be brought forward by a week for future GLA elections, to enable the elections brochure to be produced and delivered before postal ballot papers are sent out. (Recommendation 1, page 9)

Postal ballot papers

For future elections, the unique number on postal ballot papers should be visible without having to unfold the papers. This would save time and effort for those who prepare postal ballot papers for dispatch to electors. (Recommendation 4, page 11)

Voter instructions and ballot paper design

The Government should delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer, in consultation with the Electoral Commission, for voter instructions and ballot paper design, and this delegation should be in place in good time before the 2008 elections. (Recommendation 6, page 13)

Count transparency

Elections legislation should be changed to allow indicative running totals for individual candidates to be displayed during an electronic count, providing an equivalent of the mounting piles of ballot papers that are visible during manual counts. (Recommendation 12, page 17)

Spoilt ballot papers

In future elections the declaration sheets should include a specific heading for blank votes, as distinct from spoilt votes. This would require a change in the elections rules. (Recommendation 13, page 18)

Insurance

The Government should provide an indemnity to cover the risks associated with European and GLA elections that are not covered by commercial insurance. Alternatively, the elections operation should be structured in a way that contains some of the risks, for example by delegating more responsibility and risk to Constituency Returning Officers (whose own boroughs' insurance could be extended to provide cover). (Recommendation 21, page 24)

Elections Review Committee

Postal voting

The London Assembly Elections Review Committee should investigate the question of what became of the 159,704 postal votes that were not returned to London Boroughs by electors by the 10 June deadline. The Committee should review postal voting on request in the light of the Electoral Commission's report on the subject. (Recommendation 3, page 11)

Alternative voting

The London Assembly's Elections Review Committee should consider whether legislation should be sought to allow early voting facilities to be provided for the next GLA elections and, if so, through what channels. The Committee may also wish to consider the question of e-enabled voting for the 2008 London elections. (Recommendation 5, page 12)

Advertising and Publicity

The London Assembly's Elections Review Committee should consider the respective roles of the Electoral Commission, GLA and Greater London Returning Officer in raising awareness of elections, and raising turnout, among equalities target groups, and the question of what work (if any) should be done, by whom, to increase awareness and turnout among minority target groups. (Recommendation 29, page 39)

Appendix 2: Recommendations made by the 2000 Elections Investigative Committee

Our predecessor Committee, in its report of May 2002, 'Elections and Electorate Engagement', made the following recommendations. The report is available to download from the London Assembly website: www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/index.jsp.

Leadership and Direction

That the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) should set out an action plan for the discharge of his responsibilities in early 2002. This should include setting out the roles of different members of his project team.

That the GLRO should appoint key members of the project planning team in early 2002 and thereafter as the need arises.

The GLRO must have the financial resources to appoint the full election team in good time for the 2004 elections, and have access to other specialist resources available to Government Office for London at the 2000 election.

Further consideration should be given to widening the GLRO's powers of direction of the Constituency Returning Officers to ensure consistency and good practice across London.

Any legislative changes arising from the above must be identified two years before the election in order to ensure amendments are drafted early enough to reach the statute books in good time.

The Involvement of Key Groups and Individuals

That the Electoral Commission must be consulted at all stages on changes to legislation and voter education.

That effective joint working with all relevant Returning Officers, Electoral Administrators, contractors, Political Parties, media and interested parties must start early in 2002.

That the GLRO should meet with CROs, BROs and Electoral Administrators at the earliest opportunity to prepare and establish an action plan.

Pre-election Mailshots

That the GLRO should provide the opportunity for pre-election mailshots of both the Assembly and the Mayoral candidates in order to raise voter awareness as part of his normal information to voters on the voting process.

That the GLRO should make use of the marketing expertise available in London to raise awareness amongst voters of the election.

Ballot Papers

That more extensive testing should be carried out of prototype Ballot Papers.

That the date for receipt of nominations and publication of the statement of persons *n*ominated should be brought forward. The change in timing should be in accordance with the change in the statutory deadline for the publication of the notice of election highlighted in the nominations section of this report on (page 9).

Early Voting

That early voting facilities ought to be made available for the 2004 election as a 2 year lead in time will assist a proper experimentation to be conducted.

That a minimum of three early voting polling stations at different locations be established in each Borough.

That polling stations should be located in places where the public often meet such as shopping centres.

That early voting stations should be open between 8.00am and 8.00pm on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday before Polling day.

Extensive public awareness campaigns must take place to advise people of the early voting facility.

That candidates and their agents should have access to the marked hard copies of electronic registers once the early voting period has ceased but before Polling day.

Postal and Proxy Voting

That piloting 100% postal voting, whether on a constituency basis or for the whole of London, should not be considered for 2004.

There should be concerted action to encourage postal voting as a means to increase voter turnout. Funding for the boroughs must take account of the resource implications of increased postal voting arising from postal voting on request.

That consideration should be given to central funding of advertising and publicity for postal and proxy voting through the Electoral Commission. Boroughs should be encouraged to liaise with the GLRO and Electoral Commission to ensure that the advertising and publicity provides a consistent message across London.

That early discussion should be held with electoral software suppliers about the feasibility of electronic postal and proxy voting registers to Boroughs to assist them in keeping records of those that have voted and communicating them to others with a legitimate interest in this information.

Nominations

Mayoral nominations should require the support of 50 subscribers per Borough (excluding the City of London) and be accompanied by a deposit of £10,000.

Nominations for the Assembly Constituency Members should require the support of 50 subscribers per Borough (excluding the City of London) and a deposit of £1000.

Nominations for London Wide Assembly Members (Political party list members) should require the support of 50 subscribers per Borough (excluding the City of London) and a deposit of £5000.

That the statutory deadline for the publication of the notice of election should be brought forward to be not later than the 32nd day before the day of the election and all other deadlines days prior to the publication of the notice of poll be adjusted by 7.

Polling Station Staff and Training

That the GLRO should review GLA election fees having regard to the complexity of GLA elections and the attractiveness of election duties.

That the GLRO should develop and agree a training strategy for all staff involved in preparing and running the GLA elections, and monitor and review its implementation. Consideration should be given to providing this training centrally.

That part of the poll staff fee should include a staff attend training component, and attendance at that training should be a condition on which election duties are undertaken.

Automated Count

That as manual counting of votes at GLA elections is not a viable option because of the complexity of the voting system, a decision about automated counting for the 2004 elections needs to be made in January 2002 with a view to procurement being completed in the autumn of 2002.

That counting should not start at the close of poll and should commence the day after the election not before 9.00 a.m.

That the GLRO and the contractor engaged to supply and operate automated counting systems must give clear and unambiguous guidance to CROs and electoral administrators on the detailed arrangements for the count.

That performance clauses in the contract must for the supply of electronic counting machines and software must be clear and invoked if the contractor does not achieve the specified deliverables.

That detailed and realistic count rehearsals must be carried out for each constituency, involving Returning Officers, election agents, electoral administrators, contractors, and other interested parties. Learning points should be built back in to the final arrangements and the GLRO's guidance and directions.

Verifications, Adjudications and Spoilt Papers

That Constituency Returning Officers should form specially trained teams dedicated to dealing with papers rejected by the counting machines for adjudication.

That a separate category needs to be created on the declaration of result sheets for recording blank or partially completed ballot papers to distinguish them from 'spoilt' ballot papers.

Recounts

That the GLRO must give CROs clear and standardised advice about the recounting of ballot papers whilst recognising the responsibility of the CRO to make the decision on the day.

Accuracy and Transparency of the Count

That an automated count system must incorporate a process for continuous validation of the accuracy of the count.

To give everyone confidence in the election, the contract must specify the means for securing the transparency of the count system, the processes, and how the system will be expected to provide a running tally of the counts.

A new relationship needs to be formed between electoral practitioners and political parties and their agents to ensure confidence in the proposed systems.

That a single centralised venue for the counting and coordination of results from an electronic counting system should be adopted for the 2004 election subject to a suitable venue being available and it being economic to do so.

Venue for Co-ordination of Results and Media Relationships

That careful consideration must be given to the selection of a venue for co-ordinating the results of the elections in 2004.

That suitable arrangements should be in place to deal with the media.

Overall Awareness of the GLA

Education packs for use in schools should be prepared and made available. These should contain information on both the Assembly and the Mayor and their respective functions.

Awareness of the Voting Systems

The Greater London Returning Officer is asked to work with the Electoral Commission to develop specific proposals on voter education on the voting system.

Political parties should consider how they can advise electors on the significance of second preference votes for the Mayor, and list votes for the Assembly.

The Electoral Commission is asked to raise this issue in their regular liaison with political parties.

Raising Awareness through the Media

That the Assembly Head of Media Relations considers how the media profile of the Assembly might be improved.

That the need to obtain consensus is considered on the merits of each scrutiny report.

Voter Turnout

The Greater London Returning Officer is asked to take the results of Electoral Commission research programme into account when developing the project plan for the 2004 GLA elections.

The Greater London Returning Office consider the scope for additional funding through the GLA to supplement and enhance the advertising campaign being undertaken by the Electoral Commission.

Participating in the day to day work of the Authority and Increasing the Opportunity to Vote

The Assembly is asked to consider whether greater resources should be made available for Assembly Members to undertake constituency work.

That the planning stage of each scrutiny review should consider the opportunities for greater public participation.

The Director of Secretariat is asked to ensure that each scrutiny review encourages participation via all

methods of communication possible.

The Director of Secretariat is asked to ensure that opportunities for different styles of meetings are used in scrutiny reviews in the coming 12 months, and assess the impact on active involvement that they bring.

That the Greater London Returning Officer ensures that the results of voting experiments in the May 2002 London Borough elections are taken into account in the organisation of future GLA elections.

Increasing the Desire to Vote

That the Mayor and Assembly work together to examine the particular needs of groups, including black and ethnic minority communities and young people in order to encourage them to participate in the political process.

That in the run up to the 2004 GLA Election, the GLRO and Electoral Commission should work closely with organisations that seek to engage with ethnic minorities and young people.

That the Assembly uses the new Committee structure to respond in a more timely fashion to the concerns of Londoners as they arise.

That the Assembly makes greater efforts to develop relationships with other agencies in London in the conduct of its work.

That the Assembly encourages others to investigate the specific needs of minority communities and young people and make this more widely available.

Short term action points arising

That the GLA provide a programme of educational opportunities including educational material and visits by students.

The Assembly should establish mechanisms to ensure that the electorate is informed of the achievements of both the Assembly and the Mayor. Any mechanism chosen should ensure that the Authority's work should be shown to be relevant to Londoners' concerns and to be making a difference. One mechanism by which this can be achieved is the publication of an annual report.

The Committee recognises that it is up to the Political Parties, and in their interests, to encourage the electors to exercise their votes.

Appendix 3: List of Witnesses at Evidentiary Hearings

The Committee held three meetings, on 20th October, 3rd November and 10th November 2004. The following witnesses attended the meetings:

20th October 2004

John Bennett, Deputy Greater London Returning Officer

Sam Younger, Chair, and Nicole Smith, Director of Policy, The Electoral Commission

Tony Lee, Managing Director, and Sonya Douglas, Associate Director, DRS Data & Research Services plc

3rd November 2004

Barry Quirk (Chief Executive, London Borough of Lewisham), Constituency Returning Officer, Greenwich and Lewisham

Gerald Jones (Chief Executive, London Borough of Wandsworth), Constituency Returning Officer, Merton & Wandsworth

Christine Bedier (outgoing) and Ian Sanderson (incoming), Regional European Campaign Director, Conservative Party

Christopher Cotton, 2004 Combined Elections Agent, Green Party

Victoria Marsom, London Regional Campaigns Officer, Liberal Democrat Party

Hilary Perrin, Director, London Labour Party

Daniel Moss, 2004 Combined Elections Agent, UK Independence Party

10th November 2004

Anthony Mayer, Greater London / Regional Returning Officer (in GLA / European Parliamentary elections respectively)

David Wechsler (Chief Executive, London Borough of Croydon), Deputy Regional Returning Officer (European Parliamentary Elections) and Constituency Returning Officer for Croydon and Sutton (GLA elections)

Dave Bryan, London's Area Election Planning Manager, Mike Lloyd, Director of Government Services, and Rachel Winham, Royal Mail Partnership Director, Royal Mail

Appendix 4: List of Organisations and Individuals who gave Written Submissions

Individual voters:

Eleanor Young
Paul Tierney and Nava Adams
Keith Mallinson
Tracy Bailey
Joseph Bangs
David Hogarth
Debbie Walker
Rufus Barnes
David Jones
Valerie le Vaillant
Terry McGreenera

Non-governmental organisations:

Greater London Action on Disability
Electoral Reform Society
Royal National Institute for the Blind

Electoral Administrators / Practitioners:

DRS Data & Research Services plc
Peter Stanyon, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Enfield
Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing
Michael Bentley, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Merton

Political parties, agents and candidates in the elections:

Victoria Borwick (candidate)
Peter Forrest (candidate)
Greenwich and Woolwich Constituency Labour Party
Roy Freshwater (agent)
E M W Rolph (agent)
Chris Pratt (agent / candidate)
Charlie Mansell (candidate)
Chris Cotton (agent)
Victoria Marsom (agent)
Cllr Karen Hunte (candidate)
Gerald Jones, Constituency Returning Officer for Merton and Wandsworth

Appendix 5: Postal Votes Returned After 10 June

Borough	No post mark	Total late returns	Notes
Barking & Dagenham		319	Plus 14 returned undelivered. Most late returns came in on 15th / 16th June - not clear how many due to delays in post.
Barnet		435	
Bexley		53	All marked as posted on or after 10 June.
Brent		152	Having examined the envelopes, there is nothing to suggest that there was any delay on the part of the Post Office in delivering them to us.
Bromley	190	190	No post marks
Camden		150	Plus 50 turned up at polling stations on 10 June claiming non-receipt of ballot papers; 30 re-issued due to non-receipt; and 250 applications received after 2 June, having phoned a council-funded helpline to order them, the forms were delayed in the post so not submitted in time.
City of London		13	
Croydon	265	416	151 were postmarked, 265 were not.
Ealing		442	Not clear how many were posted late/ delayed in the post.
Enfield	62	62	Mostly no postmark. ESM thinks most due to late posting rather than lost in the post.
Greenwich	53	62	1 envelope stamped 15th May arrived after the close of poll. 8 dated after 10th June. 53 arrived after 10 June but not franked. 61 returned unused.
Hackney	538	538	Returned undelivered - 278. Late returns were not franked by Post Office.
Hammersmith & Fulham	65	141	65 were not franked by post office. 10 posted in time but did not arrive. 34 sent on or after polling day. 21 were not returned in the envelope provided. 11 were from overseas.
Haringey		300	
Harrow		105	Plus seven for other boroughs which arrived too late to pass on in time for the deadline.
Havering		25	25 to 30
Hillingdon		50	less than 50. The postal service in Hillingdon was good - 75 per cent of postal ballots were returned, and the late returns are not thought to be due to delays in the post.
Hounslow			
Islington		35	Estimated figure of between 30 and 40
K & C		207	plus 106 returned undelivered.
Kingston upon Thames		169	128 returned undelivered.
Lambeth		335	335 were delivered about 3 weeks after the close of poll, and the odd one is still arriving now.
Lewisham		79	22 of these were posted after 10 June.
Merton		302	No clear evidence of delays in the post. Royal Mail failed to arrange pick-ups we thought we had agreed with them in pre-election discussions. There used to be separate dedicated pick ups for the outgoing postal votes. We were not aware this had ceased and were told when it was too late that the local authority's Royal Mail contact should be arranging as part of the council's post. Postal votes are, of course, nothing to do with the local authority but the responsibility of the returning officer. The upshot was that for our first bulk collection there was room in the van to take away only a small proportion of the envelopes and the remainder had to be collected the next day. Moreover, after we thought we had sorted the second and final main collection, there was a no-show at the appointed time, no promised RM trays for the envelopes had arrived and a vehicle arrived for the collection only after some pressure. Apparently, the Royal Mail had no staff and/or no vehicle available.
Newham			106 were returned undelivered.
Redbridge		109	
Richmond upon Thames		144	Majority were posted on or after 10 June

Borough	No post mark	Total late returns	Notes
Southwark	307	307	199 returned as addresse gone away, deceased etc. Most of 307 not franked. Breakdown provided of those that were franked (see below).
Sutton		133	
Tower Hamlets			
Waltham Forest	126	126	Returned undelivered - 129. Late returns were not franked by post office.
Wandsworth		256	Not possible to gauge how many were delayed in the post. Amounts to 1.56 per cent of postal votes issued in the Borough. 1782 were returned undelivered.
Westminster		674	Many were not postmarked, so it is difficult to gauge exactly how many were delayed in the post.
TOTAL	1606	6329	
Average	54	211	
TOTAL	1767	6962	

Appendix 6: Summary of Written Evidence & Feedback on the Director of Secretariat's Report

Topic	Recommendation by Director of Secretariat	Feedback from Witnesses
General comments		<p>'I would broadly agree with the vast majority of recommendations given'. (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'I broadly agree with the recommendations in the initial evaluation' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'I am happy with the recommendations in your summary' (subject to comments on postal voting, see below) (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral candidate)</p> <p>'I think the review is very sensible' (Victoria Borwick, Candidate in London Assembly Election)</p> <p>'The report is very thorough, and in general provides a fair reflection of events' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>
Combination of Elections	-	<p>'How far is it necessary to consider issues arising from the combined elections? There may be a GLA election coinciding with a General Election or with a Parliamentary by-election, but not with European elections until 2020. Conversely, we know there were council by-elections on June 10. Has any investigation been made into where these occurred?' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'In an ideal world there would be a single election campaign for each type of election and the campaigning would reflect only the issues of relevance to the posts to be elected. However, this is not always the case and it is often necessary to combine elections in order to prevent voter fatigue. We would support the continuation of combined polls on a case-by-case basis so long as there is a specific voter education campaign highlighting the voting methods, voting system and role of those elected for each contest. We would, however, recommend against the combination of the London Elections with a General Election if at all possible. We believe that the concentration on Westminster would be so great in such a contest that electors would be almost certain to cast their ballot on the basis of their General Election choice and ignoring Assembly and Mayoral specific issues.' (Electoral Reform Society)</p> <p>'There was a high degree of concern and disappointment over the late decision to combine these elections. There was ample time for full consideration and an earlier decision. Some of the consequences of the delay eg late rule changes and last minute production of the returning officers guidance manual, made these very complex elections even more difficult to</p>

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		<p>manage ... The late decision to combine the elections and count both electronically was a major handicap to effective planning.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'As well as the GLA election, perhaps there should also be a London referendum on a relevant contemporary issue. This may assist in increasing turnout. Brighton Council have used this to increase turnout' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'Although initially I had considered holding all the elections (European and London) on the same day as a good idea. I now think that in the end it confused the electorate. The plethora of messages and the final ballot papers were too much for most people to take in.' (Victoria Borwick, Candidate in London Assembly Election)</p> <p>'There should never be more than the Mayoral and Assembly elections on the same day – combination with parliamentary and local by-elections should not be permitted. Voters have enough to cope with when choosing the Mayor, their Constituency Assembly Member and a London-wide Assembly Member' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>
Elections legislation	<p>The Greater London Returning Officer should make representations to the Government on the need for elections legislation, rules and financial guidance to be in place in good time before each election. (Recommendation 24, page 28)</p>	<p>'This is in general agreed. Undoubtedly, as had been predicted by Returning Officers, the situation was greatly aggravated by combinations, and the changes in the election timetable were late. Fee notification from the DCA was late and also a problem. The sheer volume of legislative change itself caused a problem of overload when it did arrive, making it difficult to spot significant issues and errors' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer)</p> <p>'Agreed - decisions, legislation and guidance should be timely'. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
Elections timetable	<p>The deadline for candidates' nominations should be brought forward by a week for future GLA elections, to enable the elections brochure to be produced and delivered before postal ballot papers are sent out. (Recommendation 1, page 9)</p>	<p>Agreed (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'Bringing the deadline for candidates' nominations forward by one week should cause no problems, so long as nomination packs are still circulated with more than ample time for parties' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p>

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		<p>'From a political party's point of view, I have no problems with any time frames being extended by a reasonable length of time. Issuing of postal votes on time seems to be a regular problem, especially when these have to fit in with Freepost leaflet and Mayoral Booklet distributions. Extending timeframes can only remove problems.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'Agreed. There was insufficient time for postal voters to receive their elections brochure before their postal votes were despatched.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'I would support a longer timetable to allow more time to provide ballot packs prior to postal voting starting' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'An extension of time to allow distribution of the booklet would be welcome' ((Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>'Many elderly postal voters lost their vote because the timetable failed to take account of the incidence of the Bank Holiday at the end of May and the popularity of this weekend as the jumping off point for holidays for those who, for example, do not like the heat of Mediterranean summer. A survey of my supporters in just one Ward (out of 19) in Haringey showed more than 20 who lost their vote in this way. Timetabling of PV arrangements must take account of holiday periods and provide a greater lead time accordingly' (Peter Forrest, Conservative candidate for Enfield and Haringey London Assembly election)</p> <p>'With the increase in postal voting more time needs to be allowed prior to the postal voting return date for election material - say an additional week, but not too long as the electorate get bored!' (Victoria Borwick, Candidate in London Assembly Election)</p> <p>'As has already been recommended elsewhere, the close of nominations should be brought forward by five working days to give extra time for the candidate address booklets to be produced and circulated. The legislation must also be put in place much earlier. However, the legislative framework should not be significantly different to that used at other elections (to do so will only confuse the electorate and administrators), but simply adapted to suit any specific needs and / or differences' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>

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Nominations Process	-	<p>'The late rule changes to nomination papers have been noted in [the Director of Secretariat's] initial review. However, in particular, the wrong consent to nomination forms being included in the packs did cause some delays with nomination papers, and in one case I informed a borough ERO of the error in the forms myself, indicating that the information hadn't already reached him from London Elects' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I found it frustrating not being able to get constituency nomination forms from London Elects. Was it really not possible to get them from there as well as the local lead ERO' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I appreciated the attempts to level the timings for entering nomination papers across the elections' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I found the EROs and their offices much slower to respond than London Elects' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'The Boroughs didn't seem to take into account that nomination papers would not be lodged with them in person. Logistically this would take a very long time for one person to do. Quite a few people were agents for all of the candidates, and being able to have a system for lodging them safely without attending ourselves would help' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'ERO contact details on the websites were for the Returning Officer not the ERO. This might have been more useful, or at least a distinction made. Often the offices are in completely separate buildings which delayed contact with them' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'From the point of view of an agent, the most unnecessary difficulties were caused in gathering nomination signatures by the fact that a separate electoral roll had to be obtained for each borough for the purposes of finding 10 signatures. This problem was continued by the fact that electoral rolls obtained for two boroughs were out of date. I was informed of one of these less than 24 hours before handing in of nominations, and the other when one set of signatures was rejected. I would strongly support a centralised London Electoral roll to be maintained in future.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'There was confusion amongst candidates about which authority to approach for nomination papers for the various elections. The question arises should London Elects supply nomination papers for all the 2008 elections?' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London</p>

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		<p>Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>“More time was needed to get the 330 signatures (10 from each London Borough) for the Mayoral candidate’s forms. Would it be possible for these forms to be issued before the election is formally called? Here in Enfield the voter’s cards were distributed by Enfield Council weeks ahead. After all, everyone knew there were going to be elections. It wasn’t as though the Government called a ‘snap’ election’ (Mrs E M W Rolph, Election Agent for UKIP)</p>
Voting System	-	<p>Electoral Reform Society argued that the voting system for GLA elections should be changed, to an Alternative Vote for the Mayoral ballot (where voters can identify as many preferences as they wish, numbering them 1, 2, 3, etc in order of priority; and to a Single Transferable Vote system for the London Assembly (preferential voting in multi-member constituencies). (Electoral Reform Society).</p> <p>‘I strongly support the retention of the current AMS system of voting for the Assembly and the Supplementary Voting system for the Mayor’ (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>‘I believe the recommendation [on the design of ballot papers] precisely misses the point. No matter how the papers' design may be improved, there will still be at least 3 different voting systems [4 applied on 10th June] for voters to understand. The inherent complexity encourages 'across the board' voting faute de mieux, as evidenced for example by the very large number of UKIP voters who voted UKIP across every single ballot paper. I do not believe that this would have occurred if the European and GLA elections had been separated in time. Voting arrangements and timetabling should be designed to encourage voters' real voting preferences to be registered. This is, I accept, probably more a point for the Electoral Commission’ (Peter Forrest, Conservative candidate for Enfield and Haringey London Assembly election)</p> <p>Age Concern Tower Hamlets told us that some of their members had found the voting system confusing, in that it was not clear to them whether or not they had to use the second preference Mayoral vote. Valerie Owen, a London voter, said, ‘my husband and I voted and we both agreed the sheer number of candidates listed, plus having 2 or 3 ballot papers to complete at the same time, made it quite complicated. We are both intelligent, literate and speak English as a first language – but when we discussed the ballot at home later, we both</p>

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		<p>said we needed to concentrate hard when completing the papers in order not to spoil them!'. Greater London Action on Disability wrote, 'the voting process was complex, and difficult for anyone who did not understand the first and second preference votes etc, let alone someone who needed the form explained because the print was too small!'. </p>
Voter instructions and ballot paper design	<p>The Government should delegate authority to the Greater London Returning Officer, in consultation with the Electoral Commission, for voter instructions and ballot paper design, and this delegation should be in place in good time before the 2008 elections. (Recommendation 6, page 13)</p>	<p>Agreed (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'The instructions to voters and envelopes sent out varied immensely in their instructions and design. Some seemed very simple. Others very complicated. It would be good to have the same system across London' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent). 'Ken claims that London has more languages spoken in the capital than any other city in the world. A system of language mentors / translators might be beneficial' (Terry McGrenera, Green Party Candidate in the London-wide Assembly election) 'The Electoral Reform Society was critical of the Government's decision not to allow the GLRO discretion to alter the wording on ballot papers to give voters more information about the voting system in use and to instruct them how to cast a valid vote. In particular, the Society would have liked to have seen a clear statement warning against casting both Mayoral preferences for the same candidate. We believe that, should the SV system be retained, this situation should be changed as a result of the continuing high level of ballot papers cast with either no second preference or both preferences cast for the same candidate.' (Electoral Reform Society) 'It is essential to improve the design of the ballot paper and to produce a single set of instructions to reduce voter confusion.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
Ballot paper and voting instructions	<p>To the extent that any mis-voting in the 2004 election was a result of misunderstanding, the GLRO should be asked to trial ballot papers / elections notices and instructions, and make any changes he sees fit, subject to the agreement of the Government and the Electoral Commission. (Recommendation 14,</p>	<p>'Agreed... There was also a small chance of confusion by voters on the London Assembly / Constituency ballot paper, which may have suggested to some voters they had two votes <u>in each column</u>. Hopefully, adequate time for trialling by the GLRO could have helped avoid such problems' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'With regard to the Mayoral Ballot there was confusion with the ballot forms and the application of first and second preferences. 'You have two votes' has encouraged over voting</p>

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	page 18)	<p>and in consequence many votes were lost. There needs to be a better system or the procedure needs to be made very clear on the ballot form' (Frank Lerner, Secretary of the Greenwich Local Government Committee of the Labour Party).</p> <p>'The ballot paper was confusing for many voters so I would strongly support this recommendation. However it is difficult to conceive a form of wording in place of "you have two votes" which would not have been "leading". In the mayoral contest especially, there was a general confusion from the general public about the voting system. This was shown strikingly by the fact that the greatest number of votes for Green Party candidates across all elections was the total of second choices for Darren Johnson as Mayor, obviously the least effective Green vote of the five possible. I feel that the returning officer and political parties (including ourselves) and particularly the media have a duty to explain this more clearly to the voter next time. I also feel that more help should be available at polling stations, especially for ethnic minorities.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'There are still issues about whether people really understand the Assembly voting system. As the list vote determines the political make-up of the Assembly, this is really the "first preference" vote with the constituency vote being the "second preference" if people wish to split their votes. There is a suspicion that nearly everyone thinks the other way round - which raises some fundamental issues about how the elections are described, the order of the elections on the ballot paper etc.' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I would support separate ballot papers for the London Assembly Divisional Seat and the London Assembly List seats, rather than them being both on the same sheet. A lot of people only seemed to cast one vote on this sheet.' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'Even if the Supplementary Vote were retained, we would argue tat the two column system of marking preferences is complicated and leads to too many ballot papers being spoiled. We would suggest a move towards a single column where voters were asked to mark their two preferences 1 and 2' (Electoral Reform Society)</p> <p>'I think this is a good idea, but it would be difficult to trial ballot papers in a way which includes assessment of tactical voting patterns and intentions. Trialling instructions and testing whether they are understood fully would be more effective' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p>

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		<p>'I attended the vote count at Alexandra Palace on 11th June. We were very surprised at the huge number of spoilt papers. I personally thought the instructions on the voting papers were clear but obviously many people were confused. The most common error was two crosses in the first choice column for London Mayor. Would it be less confusing if there was only one column on the voting paper and voters had to put the number 1 against their first choice candidate and number 2 against their second choice, or would that confuse the computer doing the counting?' (Mrs E M W Rolph, UKIP Election Agent)</p> <p>'Voting Form Design is not user friendly. We would suggest that a cross section of the public are ask to attend a meeting were various designs of voting forms using various colours are presented and a more user friendly design be agreed. Lets consider making the voting paper larger! lets consider using the colours of parties! any final design could be used in an advertising campaign where the design is shown on billboards, stations, pamphlets etc so that people are aware of their rights to vote and the colourful design is a talking point and breaks down barriers so that it feels 'cool' to vote.' (Roy Freshwater, Branch Treasurer, Haringey and Enfield Branch, UKIP)</p> <p>'I believe that providing separate ballot papers for the Mayoral election, for the Constituency Member election and the London-wide Assembly Member election should be investigated. The combined constituency and London-wide ballot paper is confusing, as demonstrated by the number of unused London-wide votes. Separating them may help simplify the voting task, but only if proper research is undertaken well in advance of the next election. Great emphasis needs to be given to explaining the various systems to voters starting well in advance of the elections and peaking in election week. The bodies to which voters are electing representatives must be clearly explained' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p> <p>'There was some progress at the recent elections, e.g. on templates for blind people, large print versions of voting papers displayed on the wall at polling stations, briefing of election staff, access to polling stations (possibly, at least in most boroughs. Some of the barriers are the responsibility of local boroughs (e.g. access to polling stations, briefing of staff) some are about national electoral policies e.g. not being able to use a large print voting paper because it would be different form everyone else's, and issues about taking someone into the polling booth with you to assist.' (Greater London Action on Disability)</p>

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		<p>'The voting process was complex, and difficult for anyone who did not understand 1st and second preference votes etc. let alone someone who needed the form explained because the print was too small!' (Greater London Action on Disability).</p> <p>The Greenwich and Woolwich constituency Labour party forwarded to us a resolution passed by the party, based on the experiences of observers at the count on 11th June. The resolution read, 'There were massive and unacceptable levels of spoilt ballot papers in the recent Mayoral and London Assembly elections. These were principally due to design and confusing instructions. Many thousands of votes were not counted through no fault (or choice) of the electors concerned. We call for an urgent reconsideration by the appropriate authorities to prevent any recurrence'.</p>
Postal Voting – timing / administrative issues	<p>If postal voting on request is to be repeated in the next London elections, the Greater London Returning Officer and the London Boroughs should take preparatory steps to manage the administrative burden on local authority elections teams. If there is no change to rules governing the handling of postal votes by political parties, the Greater London Returning Officer and London Boroughs should put in place plans to anticipate and manage effectively the potential for large late influxes of postal vote applications from political parties. The Greater London Returning Officer should keep this matter under review. (Recommendation 2, page 9)</p>	<p>'Agreed. Hopefully, the situation may stabilise by 2008. In this election the combination of unexpected higher PV volumes combined with the excessively tight timetable was one of the most significant problems in the run-up period to 10th June. Undoubtedly for 2008 all Boroughs need to have plans in place agreed with the GLRO to deal with forecast numbers, allowing for a reasonable contingency margin' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'Bringing the deadline for candidates' nominations forward by one week should cause no problems, so long as nomination packs are still circulated with more than ample time for parties.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>Proxy vote deadlines. With the date for applications for postal ballots much later, the deadline for changes to these or for proxy votes is earlier. This led to many people missing out on their postal vote when it was sent out after they left to go on holiday and not being able to change their request from a postal ballot to a proxy one. Would it be possible to send out early application postal votes at a much earlier publicised date?' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'With the well-publicised problems with the post office and mail delivery I think it would be useful to have a review of postal voting. Was the London postal vote turnout consistent with national postal vote turnout or with the London turnout in 2000?' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'It is very important that London Boroughs take preparatory steps to manage the large late</p>

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		<p>influxes of postal vote applications but this has resource implications. At the 2004 elections the Fees and Charges Order clerical allowance did in this authority cover the staff needed to actually issue and open the postal votes but not additional resources to process the large volumes of applications and preparation of postal votes for the issue stage. This needs to be addressed if postal voting on request continues. An accredited list of printers with the ability to produce postal vote stationery on demand and on time is needed.’ (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>‘Recommendation 2 is I believe inappropriate. I would contend that the situation faced in the run-up to these elections was unprecedented, and could not have been foreseen. All Boroughs ultimately coped with the high influx of ‘late’ applications, and developed systems to cope. Having nearly been caught out, these same systems will be in place at all future elections regardless of what type – the recommendation is therefore not really relevant’ (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>
Postal voting – turnout / late returns	<p>The London Assembly Elections Review Committee should investigate the question of what became of the 159,704 postal votes that were not returned to London Boroughs by electors by the 10 June deadline. The Committee should review postal voting on request in the light of the Electoral Commission’s report on the subject. (Recommendation 3, page 11)</p>	<p>‘In general, the Wandsworth / Merton experience was that late returns received by Royal Mail were low at only 5 per cent of the total non-returns, and if anything lower than in some earlier years. The unreturned votes were therefore largely those that PV applicants had presumably received but not completed or returned. The percentage of non-returns was higher than in previous years at around 35 per cent. It would appear that the utilisation rate of PVs has now declined in line with the national turn-out figures, although there may be other factors. Despite the extensive and successful efforts by political parties and the Government to increase take-up of PVs and their availability on demand, more voters in any event failed to use them for personal reason or another. PV returns have in the past rarely achieved 80 per cent of the issued numbers, even for General Elections with high turnout levels’ (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>‘No political party should be involved in soliciting postal votes. That should be handled by the Boroughs or the GLA’ (Terry McGreenera, Green Party candidate in London-wide Assembly election). Also expressed concerns about Royal Mail failure to deliver postal ballot papers, referring to an article in East End Life about the discovery by residents of a bag of un-posted mail.</p> <p>‘There were concerns, over both the performance of the Royal Mail in relation to deliveries of</p>

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		<p>postal votes to electors and their complacent attitude to non delivery '2-3% non delivery is within our targets'. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>Mr Paul Tierney and Ms Nava Adams, from Ealing, did not receive their postal vote before going away on holiday on 4th. Their papers were dispatched to them on 1st June. Others told us that their postal votes arrived in good time (Valerie Le Vaillant, David Jones, David Hogarth, Tracey Bailey, Keith Mallinson, Eleanor Young).</p>
Postal ballot papers	<p>For future elections, the unique number on postal ballot papers should be visible without having to unfold the papers. This would save time and effort for those who prepare postal ballot papers for dispatch to electors. (Recommendation 4, page 11)</p>	<p>'The location of the numbers on ballot papers did <u>not</u> cause us any particular problems. Greater visibility would always be helpful, however' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'We are concerned to at the desire to increase the numbers of postal votes and the degree of (a) disorganisation in sending them out and (b) the ease by which they might be misused. We would prefer to keep the traditional system of voting which has served us well since its inception' (Frank Lerner, Secretary of the Greenwich Local Government Committee of the Labour Party).</p> <p>'Any new design should take into consideration the need to increase postal voting - would it be possible to contact/write to say 200 people of the 159,000 voters who did not who did not return their postal vote at the last election asking them the reason. A friendly letter could be designed asking them to tick certain square. Would it be possible to ask if a group of these people would be willing to be part of the new form design team' (Roy Freshwater, Branch Treasurer, Haringey and Enfield Branch, UKIP)</p> <p>'There has been concern over fraud in postal voting in certain north west of England constituencies where voters are being unfairly influence or voting papers are being collected from people before they are completed. It is recommended that the design of any postal vote form includes a bold section that sets out the fine for fraudulently completing voting forms and that the form has to be signed and some ID reference completed such as credit card number, bus pass number, pension book number, Disability payment book number etc.' (Roy Freshwater, Branch Treasurer, Haringey and Enfield Branch, UKIP)</p>
E-counting contract	<p>The Greater London Returning Officer should compile a checklist of clauses to be included in any</p>	<p>'Agreed. Defects that were noted in operation at the count were that the capacity of the server was insufficient under heavy load, causing screens to 'freeze' under such circumstances,</p>

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	future electronic counting contract, on the basis of lessons learned in 2004. This should include the provision of a break-down of results by ward. (Recommendation 7, page 14)	and also that there was insufficient flexibility in the system for the task of rejecting or confirming ballot papers needing adjudication; greater discretion should have been available to non-Returning Officer adjudicators. Also the plasma screen system did not operate satisfactorily and some bar code readers proved defective' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).
E-counting machines/system	-	<p>'The outside review commissioned of the DRS machines was a review of their testing procedures, rather than a review of the machines etc themselves. Is this sufficient? The independent review didn't review the actual operation of the machines. Instead it looked at the testing scheme used by the makers of the machines - and said that their testing procedures looked good. This isn't nearly as good as having the actual machines tested independently. There is a lot of trust in company.' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'One visually impaired Green Party attendee at the Alexandra Palace Count complained that screens showing disputed ballot papers were difficult to see. It is vital to consider such accessibility issues fully in future.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'On screen images greatly increased the speed of adjudication. The frozen computer screens did cause delays and there were some concerns over the accuracy of some scanners. Rescanned batches often did produce different totals. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
Count – consistency of rules	-	'There appeared to be large differences in the procedure carried out by different electoral services managers at various points in the election. For example, in allocating counting agents and invitations to opening of postal ballots' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)
Count transparency	Elections legislation should be changed to allow indicative running totals for individual candidates to be displayed during an electronic count, providing an equivalent of the mounting piles of ballot papers that are visible during manual counts.	<p>Supported (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'This would help understanding of progress and I would think that many of our activists would welcome a running picture of the likely results.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'The plasma screens were ineffective – recommendation for indicative running totals to be</p>

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	(Recommendation 12, page 17)	<p>displayed – agreed.’ (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>‘I support indicative vote totals being shown during the count’ (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>‘The recommendation misses the point. The key issue is that, just like with the first chess ‘computer’, there could be a Hungarian maths wizard curled up inside a box making up the numbers as far as anyone can tell. An improvement in transparency would be to have a physical sampling programme under which scanned papers would be examined at random in a controlled environment and the paper-based voter intention compared to its digital counterpart.</p> <p>Leaving aside the feelings of candidates as to the merits of sign-blazing running totals, I support this in transparency terms as it is a further, albeit minor, check against electronic tampering’ (Peter Forrest, Conservative candidate for Enfield and Haringey London Assembly election)</p>
Spoilt ballot papers – blank / uncertain	In future elections the declaration sheets should include a specific heading for blank votes, as distinct from spoilt votes. This would require a change in the elections rules. (Recommendation 13, page 18)	<p>Supported (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>‘Definition of ‘spoilt’ ballot papers and publicity around the numbers. This could be a lot clearer, and could prevent misleading coverage of the results’ (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>‘This would at least be useful in knowing the extent of the problem of papers being accidentally spoiled rather than deliberately.’ (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>‘Support for a specific heading for blank votes on the declaration sheet and for trials of ballot papers etc to try to reduce misunderstandings’ (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>‘I strongly support the idea that not using all the votes should not be classed as a Spoilt Votes and instead should be described as Blank Votes (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p>
Spoilt ballot papers – torn barcodes		In the event there was a design fault in the positioning of the bar code too near the tear off edge of the ballot paper, resulting in some rejected votes due to bar codes being torn off when papers were detached from their counterfoils. (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).

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		<p>'Is it acceptable for any votes at all to be lost because the barcode is torn? Could the barcode be put in a place on the ballot paper where it couldn't be damaged when being torn out of a pad etc?' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p>
Spoilt papers – adjudication process	-	<p>'[there was] inconsistency of decisions by the presiding officer and being able to see the actual ballot paper in cases of dispute' ((Frank Lerner, Secretary of the Greenwich Local Government Committee of the Labour Party).</p>
Declaration of Results	-	<p>'Ward-by-ward results: Whatever the decision made about declaring ward-by-ward results, we believe it should be driven by London Elects or the GLRO, not led by the company. We believe it should also be a formal decision, not as haphazard as it appeared.</p> <p>For the future, more localised results could be useful, but particularly so if they are by polling district. The main area of potential error using counting machines is their configuration. Having the results by polling district would we hope allow us to see trends, but particularly identify indications of problems with the results' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'Ward data is extremely useful especially for parties who do not have sufficient resources to stand in every local election. By helping both the returning officer and political parties, a vibrant electoral process will be aided in future.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'Support for provision of a break-down of results by ward – better planning needed'. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'If it is proposed to legitimise the provision of Ward by Ward voting information then postal votes cast [ever increasing] should also be attributed Ward by Ward. There is no logic in providing such a detailed breakdown only then to lump all PVs boroughwide into one global number'. (Peter Forrest, Conservative candidate for Enfield and Haringey London Assembly election)</p> <p>'Whilst we applaud the desire of London Elects to provide as much information about the election results as possible, we believe that there can be such a thing as too much information and information provision should be tailored where possible to the end user. In the case of the</p>

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		<p>Mayoral Election, the key information is the number of first preference votes garnered by each candidate, the selection of the top two candidates to enter the second round, the number of second preference votes cast for each of these candidates and the final result. Providing a complete breakdown of the number of second preference votes for the excluded candidate is certainly useful for some people (ourselves included) but does not add to public understanding of the SV voting system. The lack of clarity about the level of spoiled and wasted votes also resulted in unnecessarily bad publicity about the election'. (Electoral Reform Society)</p> <p>'If the local, list and Mayoral results were all announced at the count centre it may keep the interest going' (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>'DRS were asked by London Elects as part of the contract to provide percentage turnout figures at ward level. DRS designed and developed the e-counting software to produce this report and this facility was fully functioning.</p> <p>For ward turnout data to be produced the system must be pre-loaded with the total number of electors per wards i.e total number of electors / number of votes cast at ward level = percentage turnout at ward level.</p> <p>As part of the many months of discussions with each London Borough DRS had requested total number of electors at ward level for each contest, and had provided Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets templates and clear instructions to each borough to aid the provision of this data. As the final list of voters does not close until quite close to the election day, boroughs were not able to provide this data until very close to the election for loading into the e-counting software.</p> <p>Many London Boroughs were not able to produce this data because their Election Management systems did not provide this facility and the data was not available elsewhere. During the lead up to the count day many electoral services managers either said that this data could not be produce or that they did not have time and it was not a priority to them therefore it would not be completed.</p> <p>For all boroughs that provided elector totals per ward, ward turnout figures were available. The provision of results at ward level was not requested until after the election and this data was provided to London Elects.</p> <p>Many requests for this data came direct to DRS from third parties including political parties and the media. DRS directed these requests back to London Elects as the owner of the data.</p>

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		<p>DRS did not feel that it was appropriate to distribute data to third parties without consent from London Elects.</p> <p>London Elects did not agree and redirected all third party requests for results data back to DRS in the weeks following the election. DRS responded to all requests but believe that for future elections the distribution and release of election data should be a responsibility of London Elects or a representative of the GLRO, not the e-counting contractor to avoid distribution of data to parties not eligible to receive it.' (DRS Data & Research Services plc)</p>
Count Venues – multi-constituency count centres	<p>The Greater London Returning Officer should conduct a cost/benefit analysis of multi-constituency count centres, and the results of this should be reported to the London Assembly's Elections Review Committee for its consideration. (Recommendation 8, page 15)</p>	<p>'It is not considered multi-count venues are desirable per se, if satisfactory local alternatives are available. Transport to a multi-centre venue is likely to be slower, getting staff there is likely to be more difficult and expensive, the accountability of the CRO for conducting the count is weakened at a multi-count venue, and any risks to security or of failure have greater impact at such locations. There may be compensatory cost or other savings, but it is considered there are major intrinsic benefits from Constituency Counts that would need to be outweighed before any general policy of multi-count venues should be adopted. Local counts are also more convenient and accessible for local agents' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'As a party we found it easy to use the multi count venues. In particular it enabled us to have very experienced personnel in venues where they would be able to support more of our count teams faster than otherwise'. (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I felt the arrangement in 2004 was quite reasonable. The two major count centres were both accessible from most of the constituencies covered, and it makes sense if large venues are used to use them for as many constituencies as can travel to the venue easily.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'I have no objection to a single site of just a few sites with a number of counts going on. This should save money. It would be sensible to hold the count all day on a Friday rather than through Thursday night.' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Party Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'The [count] at Alexandra Palace for three London areas was fine. It is a huge building and we didn't get under each other's feet' (Mrs E M W Rolph, UKIP Election Agent)</p> <p>(In response to the question, should more use be made of multi-constituency count centres?)</p>

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		<p>'unequivocally yes. Having participated in the Alexandra Palace 'super-count', the benefits are significant. Communications links, GLRO support, DRS support and liaison arrangements with fellow BROs was excellent. However, there is a need for the GLRO to project manage the super-count sites – it is too much to expect individual boroughs to provide that role effectively. I personally ended up acting as site coordinator, liaising with the nine BROs, the GLRO, the Alexandra Palace management, DRS and numerous other bodies whilst still administering the elections in Enfield. As an administrative recommendation, the GLRO should designate a project manager to undertake the general task of overseeing arrangements for the wider count venue, thus allowing the CROs time to manage their individual count areas within it ' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>

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Count Venues	<p>The Greater London Returning Officer should, in consultation with the electronic counting contractor and the London boroughs, compile a checklist for arrangements at count venues. This should include: appropriate lighting, power supply and communications links, availability of chairs and tables, and the provision of refreshments for count staff. (Recommendation 9, page 15)</p>	<p>‘Agreed. We experienced no problems with the information from DRS in June’ (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>‘The multiple count at Olympia worked extremely well. There was excellent co-operation between the two lead boroughs and management tasks were shared. The Olympia manager was accustomed to managing large events and was most helpful with contacts eg security. A check list for arrangements at count venues would be welcomed’ (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>‘This was done with great attention to detail by DRS. DRS worked with London Elects and every lead borough for many months producing a detailed “Count Specification Document” that was unique for every venue.</p> <p>The document included all items included in the recommendation and many more. The documents were reviewed, updated and refined in partnership with DRS and the constituency lead boroughs. These documents were sent direct to the boroughs and were available online via the dedicated project website set up by DRS. Also through this website all boroughs and London elects had access to detailed count venue layouts that showed the location of every item within the count including the telecommunications and furniture.</p> <p>Every count venue was visited at least twice, but many were visited many more times by the DRS project team and the lead boroughs to walk through and discuss the details of the count venue.</p> <p>Examples of all count venue documentation can be provided to assist this review.’ DRS Data & Research Services plc)</p>
City Hall	<p>For future GLA elections, if City Hall is used as a venue, the Greater London Authority Chief Executive should consider whether staff should be allowed to work as usual in the building until 1pm. (Recommendation 10, page 16)</p>	
	<p>The Greater London Returning Officer and the Greater London Authority should review what</p>	<p>‘In City Hall I felt there were several issues; Although we were able to use our party offices and equipment, which was very helpful, it was</p>

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	<p>accommodation should be provided for Mayoral candidates during the count for future Greater London Authority elections. (Recommendation 11, page 16)</p>	<p>a long way from the area declarations were made in. This made it difficult to use the information in the way I needed to.</p> <p>Although we had passes for different access, even with access to all areas we weren't able to get access to the lifts without a staff member and pass. This made moving about City Hall quickly very difficult.</p> <p>Some declarations seemed to take a long time to come through after the result had been given to candidates and sub-agents locally.</p> <p>I felt that the last few declarations were delayed in order to make the mayoral declaration more dramatic'. (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'Although being based in the offices of our Assembly members was useful, it caused difficulties that this was 6 floors above the actual announcements meaning that a system of "runners" between the floors was required. If City Hall is used in future perhaps results could be announced over the public address system.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent)</p> <p>'City Hall is certainly appropriate, and of sufficient size to hold such an event. Some plans should be made to resolve some issues which were problematic on the day, such as distance of candidates' bases from the result announcements and the technical problems with updates on progress of counts around London.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'I would support using City Hall again as the central venue for the Count.' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Party Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'City Hall seems an obvious place for a central venue and the facilities made available to the parties appeared to be fine'. (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>'I can see no reason why City Hall should not be used again as the central venue' (Mrs E M W Rolph, UKIP Election Agent)</p> <p>'City Hall was very crowded and facilities were not ideal. The previous time (2000) at the Conference Centre in Victoria seemed to have been better' (Victoria Borwick, Candidate in London Assembly Election)</p>
London Elects	-	<p>'The GLRO and London Elects did a first-rate job in successfully co-ordinating an exceptionally complex and difficult election and the support and information to CROs was good' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p>

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		<p>'Overall I felt that the London Elects Team were very efficient and helpful to work with' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'I would like to thank the London Elects Operations team for being as helpful as they possibly could be at all times, meaning that other potential problems were removed.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'I should once again acknowledge the help of the London Elects team in all the administrative matters' (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p>
Head of London Elects	For future elections, there should be a full-time head of London Elects, possibly the Deputy Greater London Returning Officer, with responsibility for both the operations and communications sides of the elections team. (Recommendation 22, page 26)	<p>'Agreed although it was not considered there were any problems arising out of the June 2004 arrangements' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'Agreed - this should be a competent individual with suitable experience and sufficient time available' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
Working with Constituency and Borough Returning Officers	The Greater London Returning Officer should put in place arrangements to ensure effective communication between the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and London's returning officers and electoral services managers. (Recommendation 25, page 30)	<p>'Agreed. It would certainly be beneficial to develop the information flow from the GLEAP to all Returning Officers and Electoral Services teams' 'On occasions CROs and BROs would have benefited from earlier information on a few points by generally this was occasioned by delays with the DCA. Staff at the GLA and Boroughs showed immense commitment' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'Agreed' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'the Greater London Returning Officer should actively promote any necessary changes to the legislative framework very early in the process, but in consultation with the Borough returning Officers. It would therefore be sensible for regular meetings of the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel to be arranged from a minimum of two years before the next election. If a consensus is reached in respect of a specific piece of electoral reform, a more proactive approach should be taken in drafting the legislative outline for submission to the appropriate government department' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>
	Events and publications aimed at returning officers	'Not agreed. It is considered essential to have at least some formal meetings with all BROs

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	and electoral services managers (which were effective in ensuring that all the necessary information was available to those who needed it in the boroughs) should be adopted for future elections, with the possible exception of the Returning Officer Forum which, in the context of Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and the electoral services manager away days, may not be necessary. (Recommendation 26, page 31)	present in order to ensure they are made accountable for following various instructions and procedures set down by the GLRO. It is not considered it is satisfactory to rely on communications to electoral services managers (who would generally be at less senior grades than BROs) or CROs, who are not accountable for operations in other Boroughs. This is considered particularly significant since in June 2004 it is clear some ESMs were barely able to cope under the pressure of postal vote volumes etc., a crisis situation that was ultimately the responsibility of the relevant BRO' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'Agreed' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing) 'I agree that there is no need for the Returning Officers Forum in 2008, so long as the Greater London Elections Advisory Panel and electoral services manager away days continue' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)
GLRO powers of direction	-	'It is considered the confused responsibility of BROs and CROs for count activities and budgets made for difficulties and reduced accountability. IN the past, CROs have been accountable for both at European Elections and this always worked well. It is therefore proposed for future GLA elections CROs should have budget and staffing responsibility for counts and could then delegate functions and budgets down to other BROs, as in the past' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).
Training and Guidance	The Greater London Returning Officer should consider whether a mock-up of a count should be set up within London in the two months before the next GLA election. This would enable more count staff to take part in count walk-throughs, a training method which proved to be very effective for the 2004 election count. (Recommendation 27, page 33)	'The June 2004 count training was considered satisfactory. It is not clear if an earlier mock-up count for training would be realistically achievable. If so, it could be a help. However with 14 counts, only 14 half days are required for training via a mock count, so it is not clear that a full two months would be required. Releasing staff for count training was not recognised as an activity by CROs that required the GLRO to reimburse them. This should be corrected in 2008 and a payment made so that this activity is not subsidised by Boroughs' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).
	A training programme similar to that developed and	'I felt that the training London Elects provided was useful especially the DRS training at City

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	<p>delivered by London Elects in 2004 (which was widely commended as outstanding) should be implemented for the 2008 elections, subject only to the outcome of reviews of the programme by Deloitte and the Electoral Commission. (Recommendation 28, page 33)</p>	<p>Hall' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'The London Elects monthly bulletins by e-mail were well received by Lib Dem campaigners across London' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'The website had useful information and was simple to access. I also appreciated that older information was still accessible late on in the campaign and also after the campaign was over' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'At times I felt that some of the questions I had for London Elects wouldn't be answered until quite late in the day which delayed my instructions to my colleagues' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'Not supported. It is considered a more flexible and devolved approach to training should be developed for 2008. Boroughs have different requirements and it would be preferable if they could elect to receive more training funds from the GLRO to conduct training locally if this was considered more effective. The centrally-mounted programme, whilst of high quality, went beyond the needs of our constituency' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p> <p>'Agreed – Both the count walk through and mock count set up at Milton Keynes were very beneficial. The Count training at City Hall was useful for staff operating the VDUs but the room was too small to accommodate a full count set up and it was more difficult for the marshals teams to benefit from this training experience. The count video was very helpful for staff who were unable to attend the training day and assisted with compilation of the count instructions.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'The polling station handbook was very well laid out with all relevant details. If there was a fault it was a surfeit of information. Were all those fact sheets really necessary? Too much information can result in key information being overlooked.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'As well as running count training at City Hall, DRS also produced a full training video that contained instructions for every stage of the electronic count. DRS also produced a software training tool that could be used by borough staff to practice using the various software modules that they would be using during the count. DVD's, Videos and CD-Roms were supplied to every borough, London Elects, the Electoral Commission and the Office of the</p>

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		Deputy Prime Minister.' (DRS Data & Research Services plc)
Advertising and Publicity	The London Assembly's Elections Review Committee should consider the respective roles of the Electoral Commission, GLA and Greater London Returning Officer in raising awareness of elections, and raising turnout, among equalities target groups, and the question of what work (if any) should be done, by whom, to increase awareness and turnout among minority target groups. (Recommendation 29, page 39)	<p>'Agreed. It is considered the 2004 overall publicity budgets were large, and more could be delegated to Borough level for posters, leaflets and on-the-spot campaigns. The clarity and accountability of the publicity process could undoubtedly be improved. Targeting of minority groups in 2004 did occur, although its effectiveness was perhaps doubtful' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'Serious consideration ought to be given to explaining the election process via the television and internet in 'simple' illustrative terms. These are the main sources of information consumption and are visual and accessible to the vast majority of electors. Ordinary people I met were very confused by the process and would rather not vote than make the mistake of voting or their opposition. People simply did not know what all elections were about and often the elections were disenfranchising the people that need to vote the most' (Cllr Karen Hunte, Candidate for London-wide Assembly Member election, and Lead Member for Youth Involvement, and Chair of Perivale Area Committee, Ealing Council)</p> <p>'I strongly support this recommendation. Reports from campaigning activities suggested that awareness of the difference voting system was especially weak amongst members of the public from some ethnic minorities' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'The simple answer [to the question, what role should the GLA and others play in targeted awareness-raising in future] is 'more'. I'm not personally aware of how widely the "minority media" was targeted but as with the "mainstream media" there needs to be more explanation of what people are voting for and how the voting system works. Simply stating, " vote on June 10th" will have less effect. The elections for the Assembly should also be given more publicity, as the public more generally misunderstood this. It would be desirable for the assembly elections to be covered more explicitly by the booklet and arrangements should be made for promotion of Assembly campaigns in broadcasts.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>'The ideal publicity model would be for the GLRO and Electoral Commission to raise awareness of the fact that elections are happening, which posts are being elected and how to vote (The first two were done very effectively in 2004). Then the political parties through their candidates and policies should make voting a sufficiently attractive option for people to do</p>

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		<p>so.’ (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent).</p> <p>‘We applaud the actions of the Assembly, the Government, the Electoral Commission and others to make a priority of the need to encourage people to vote and to understand what it is that the Mayor and Assembly do. We also applaud the decision to include the European Elections within the remit of the publicity drive and not to sideline these elections. We recognise, however, that the process of educating people about the responsibilities of the GLA and the method of election is a slow one. We also believe that, whilst London Elects did a generally good job in publicising the elections, there is more that could be done in the future. Specific initiatives might include: Party campaigning</p> <p>The Electoral Reform Society believes that, in general, more party campaigning leads to a more informed electorate and therefore a higher turnout. We therefore support moves such as hustings events, roadshows and TV debates which are likely to increase the amount of party campaigning.</p> <p>Take your children to vote initiative</p> <p>The Government is planning to amend the law to allow people who are neither election officials nor electors to enter a working polling station. Whilst this change is primarily aimed at allowing access for international observers, it could also be used to encourage parents to take their children into polling stations and see the workings of the electoral process.</p> <p>London wide Mock election</p> <p>Mock elections have been used by schools for a number of years to educate pupils about the workings of democracy and to encourage young people to discuss political issues. A London-wide mock election programme could range in scale from a way of electing a shadow young people’s Mayor and Assembly to school based programmes. Whatever process is used, it can dovetail with citizenship education lessons to educate young people about the purpose of the Mayor and Assembly and the voting systems used.</p> <p>Polling Day and eve of poll publicity drives</p> <p>Young people in particular have often highlighted the lack of special events to welcome polling day – held either on polling day itself or the evening before. The most common ideas mentioned are concerts either in a central venue or outside polling stations. In practical terms,</p>

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		<p>the most sensible proposition might be an eve of poll event held at a central London venue.</p> <p>Voting age The Electoral Reform Society supports the campaign to lower the voting age to 16 as we believe it will provide a connection between citizenship education classes and the practice of voting. We also believe that it will lead to a long-term rise in the level of turnout in elections. (Electoral Reform Society)</p> <p>‘Agreed – The web site was user friendly and current. The ‘how to vote animation’ was innovative and informative. Experiences of the telephone helpline reported to the Electoral Services Office were not positive. There were complaints of slow response time and incorrect information’. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>‘The advertising for the June elections appeared to be quite comprehensive i.e. seen on buses and TV. The apparent wish of the Government to experiment with the voting systems should leave the cost of explaining them down to them and not the council tax payer’ (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>‘In areas of a very high level of non-English speakers leafleting and explanation may be required but not as blanket coverage across the whole region’ (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>‘In my opinion, it is essential that targeted awareness-raising is undertaken in advance of the 2008 elections. To avoid a fragmented approach across London, the Greater London Returning Officer should once again provide for a specialist communications team (albeit with greater understanding of the legislative limitations placed upon electoral administrators) with the remit to raise voter awareness across the entire electorate.</p> <p>Greater emphasis should be placed on getting all Borough communication teams working with the GLRO, thus assisting in getting a consistent and branded message out across the capital.</p> <p>‘Heavyweight encouragement should be sought to raise such awareness, possibly via the Leaders’ Committee of the ALC.</p> <p>The GLA elections are different to anything else voters are required to face, so it is essential that information and advice is disseminated in the most appropriate way’ (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>

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		<p>'London Elects leaflets were very good - including using fairly easy words, and larger print in parts. They did not, however make the accessible formats available - and they did not produce an easy words version - judging by the success of the easy Words manifesto which GLAD produced, there is a demand.</p> <p>- London Elects needs to target information (and images of voters in their publicity) at disabled and Deaf people, and run voter registration/encouraging people to vote campaigns, working with organisations of disabled people</p> <p>- The Deaf community had better access e.g. subtitled (and sometimes signed) political broadcasts, but still unequal access' (Greater London Action on Disability)</p>
Mayoral Address Booklet	<p>-</p>	<p>'I was disturbed that arrangements for the printing and delivery of the Mayoral booklet were left until so late in the day' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'London Elects staff worked very hard to get the best results for our artwork in the booklet. I was disturbed that they didn't have access to real copies of the 2000 booklet, only photocopies. It seemed that experience and knowledge gained in 2000 had been lost – I hope the same doesn't occur between now and 2008' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'This year it was felt that the information in the booklet about the other elections taking place on the same day as the mayoral was better, but still very limited. Basically we feel there needs to be more inclusion in the booklet about the other elections'. (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'A key issue was that the freepost booklet of manifestos arrived after postal ballots already applied for had been sent out. It is known that many people complete them immediately or over the next weekend. What can be done to prevent this happening in the future?' (Victoria Marsom, Liberal Democrat Election Agent).</p> <p>'The Society supports the continued production of a manifestos booklet. We support the extension of this booklet to include information on the list candidates and, in 2004, the European Elections. We would like to see consideration given to allowing each of the parties standing in the list elections a single page manifesto on the same contribution basis as</p>

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		currently exists for the Mayoral manifestos'. (Electoral Reform Society)
Elections Budget & Expenditure	The overall budget and its component elements should be agreed as early on in the project as possible.	
	The budget should be kept under regular review and its requirements considered as part of the Authority's budget and business planning process.	
	Options for dealing with Mayoral and Constituency by-elections should be assessed and built into future budget and business plans.	
	The terms of any joint agreements with the Government or other third party should be agreed in writing before the Authority enters any commitments.	
	Action should be taken to encourage the London boroughs to submit timely returns in respect of elections expenses.	'If the GLA wishes the Boroughs to submit 'timely returns', the accounting mechanisms and form of return should be simplified, i.e. the cumbersome accounting requirements of the Election Claims Unit should not be perpetuated' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)
	The roles and responsibilities of project members and the reasons for various controls and decision making processes should be clearly communicated to all project members. (Recommendations 15 to 20, page 23)	

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	<p>The GLA should establish plans now for what human resources are needed, and when, in order to begin planning for the 2008 elections; ensure London's voice is heard in debates on elections policy and practice; take forward negotiations with the Government about proposals for legislative change; provide for the eventuality of a Mayoral or Constituency Member by-election, or for a referendum in which the Chief Executive of the Greater London Authority may be appointed as a regional counting officer. (Recommendation 23, page 27)</p>	<p>'Recommendations agreed. High level of concern over the very late production of the accounting guidance – in June 2004. For these elections to run smoothly, arrangements such as provision of mobile phones had to be put in place in advance of receipt of these guidelines and these could not be retracted at such a late stage.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>Agreed. (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
Fees scale		<p>'A number of changes in the fees and budgets are considered desirable from a CRO point of view, mainly requiring approval from the DCA:</p> <p>The clerical budget was inadequate given the high volume of postal votes;</p> <p>The overall DCA fee scale has 'steps' that are too large: 30,000 electors. This should be changed to a smaller-stepped fee and charge scale of 5,000 voter steps so Boroughs and Constituencies just below a threshold level are not disadvantaged;</p> <p>Postal vote budgets should be volume-related;</p> <p>There should be flexibility on the use of budget for additional poll clerks to respond to local circumstances, within an adequate total budget for polling station staff;</p> <p>A referendum should use GLA constituencies to ease the organisational problems' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer).</p>
Insurance	<p>The Government should provide an indemnity to cover the risks associated with European and GLA elections that are not covered by commercial</p>	<p>'The DCA and Government should support all risks via a central insurance arrangement. This would be more cost-effective than requiring each CRO to negotiate extended insurance at a</p>

Topic	Recommendation by Director of Secretariat	Feedback from Witnesses
	<p>insurance. Alternatively, the elections operation should be structured in a way that contains some of the risks, for example by delegating more responsibility and risk to Constituency Returning Officers (whose own boroughs' insurance could be extended to provide cover). (Recommendation 21, page 24)</p>	<p>time of pressure to election run-in activities' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'Agreed' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p>
<p>Early voting</p>	<p>The London Assembly's Elections Review Committee should consider whether legislation should be sought to allow early voting facilities to be provided for the next GLA elections and, if so, through what channels. The Committee may also wish to consider the question of e-enabled voting for the 2008 London elections. (Recommendation 5, page 12)</p>	<p>'It is not considered early voting was a sufficient success in 2000 to warrant a repeat. It adds to the complexity of the election for little gain. E-voting is as yet considered to be unproven, both in terms of 100 per cent reliability and safety from hacking or election fraud. Development of full assured systems will take some years – probably it is already too late for 2008. Also it has not been demonstrated in pilots to be in demand from voters, although this may change. The same applies to text and telephone voting systems. It is considered it would be sensible to await national pilots and fully tested systems before embarking on GLA initiatives which could be costly, and carry compounded risks in an election that is already complex' (Gerald Jones, Merton and Wandsworth Constituency Returning Officer). 'I would oppose e-enabled or early voting even in 2008. Multi-channel elections are by nature more open to corruption, and for such a large-scale election it would require many more years to show that such elections would be fair and free of practical/technical problems. Early voting would be, in my mind, supplementary to requirements. For those who cannot vote on election day postal and proxy voting arrangements already exist, hence this is not a question of accessibility. I also feel that it's easier for political parties to encourage voters to vote on a given day, rather than a range of days, so this would be an ineffective use of resources and even counter-productive.' (Christopher Cotton, Green Party Election Agent) 'There is little support for a repeat of early voting by the traditional method. Only about 2% of electors took advantage of this in 2000.' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing) 'I think early voting can simply be operated through allowing people to return their postal votes to a designated places in each borough (mainly Council Offices) and publicising this as an additional part of the "home voting" option above' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Party)</p>

Topic	Recommendation by Director of Secretariat	Feedback from Witnesses
		<p>Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'I do not support early voting facilities' (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>'I support "early voting" if properly managed as it may increase the vote' (Victoria Borwick, Candidate in London Assembly Election)</p> <p>'I believe that greater research needs to be done as to whether the electorate wishes to be provided with early voting facilities, and if so, in what form. If a real need is identified and proves cost-effective, then the GLRO has a moral responsibility to implement what is required' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>
Multi-Channel elections in 2008?	<p>See Recommendation 5, above</p>	<p>'Ultimately, we would support the Electoral Commission's view that multi-channel elections offer the most convenience and will do the most that any change to voting method alone can do to boost turnout. However, before this is a realistic possibility, there are a number of hurdles to cross:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual registration of electors must be introduced to help combat fraud; satisfactory changes to electoral procedures must be made to ensure that the logistical problems faced in 2004 are not repeated; further trials of e-voting must take place with all logistical and technological problems overcome; studies must be undertaken to ensure that e-voting technologies deliver the result that electors vote for. We recommend the establishment of a technology task force to challenge all systems' <p>Whilst it is entirely possible that such progress will have been made in time for the London Elections of 2008 we are not confident that this will be the case' (Electoral Reform Society).</p> <p>'The use of alternative electoral technologies to assist with electoral administration, such as electronic counting, is an area where London is ahead of the rest of the UK. We believe that such technologies do not detract from elections and can help to produce a quicker and more accurate result. However, we believe that it is imperative that such technologies do not in any way detract from the voter's ability to understand the voting process or to cast their ballot. Although certain ballot paper designs may help to speed up the process of the count, these must not be used if they hinder the ability of the elector to cast their ballot.' (Electoral Reform</p>

Topic	Recommendation by Director of Secretariat	Feedback from Witnesses
		<p>Society)</p> <p>'There is support in principal for e-enabled voting. Voters in London have become accustomed to having the opportunity to register by telephone and via the internet using security codes and voting by these methods seems to be a logical progression. There is inevitably concern over the potential for fraud' (Jennie George, Electoral Services Manager, London Borough of Ealing)</p> <p>'I support the use of internet and telephone voting to be provided as part of the postal voting ballot pack and for this to made clear to the public so they can choose to opt for the "home voting" option with a choice of postal, internet and telephone voting in the pack' (Charlie Mansell, Labour Candidate for Bexley and Bromley London Assembly election)</p> <p>'If by 'multi-channel' we mean various optional ways of voting then I would answer that it is not desirable. There are serious concerns over fraud and secrecy with postal voting and I would like to see postal voting returned to a specific request for a specific reason i.e. on holiday and chronic ill-health. I am against the current argument that to encourage people to vote we must open polling stations in supermarkets, petrol stations or wherever. Nor would I encourage internet voting. It is not too much to ask people once a year at most, given local elections, to go to their local polling station. It is up to the politicians to encourage support by their actions and policies' (Christopher Pratt, UKIP Agent for Mayoral Candidate)</p> <p>'We would suggested that it should no longer be necessary to vote in a particular constituency. That voting booths be set upon all train and underground stations, supermarkets etc. That voting forms be issue on the presentation of some form of ID such as a credit card, bus pass, driving license, and other approved ID. That the person receiving the voting paper signs the counterslip of the voting form so that the signature on the ID can be checked. That the computerised list of electors is held on a laptop in each voting booth and is endorsed on the computer showing a voting slip has been issued to a particular person. That all computerised list are downloaded when voting stations are closed by Returning Officers to check whether duplicate slips have been issued against a particular name.' (Roy Freshwater, Branch Treasurer, Haringey and Enfield Branch, UKIP)</p> <p>'I'm not happy with the concept of e-voting because... there is no guarantee that the vote will be received and accounted for. It would be impossible for agents / candidates to check'. (Mrs E M W Rolph, UKIP Election Agent)</p>

Topic	Recommendation by Director of Secretariat	Feedback from Witnesses
		<p>'I am opposed in principle to the adoption of any [new] voting channels which are solely reliant on technology - because of the risks of electoral fraud and the lack of transparency.' (Peter Forrest, Conservative candidate for Enfield and Haringey London Assembly election)</p> <p>'As a personal preference, I believe that internet and telephone early voting options (rather than 'traditional' early voting polling stations) should be offered prior to polling day, subject to reassurances as to their integrity. To do so offers an alternative and 'modern' option to voting in person at a polling station or by post whilst still retaining the latter two options for voters who wish to continue using those 'traditional' methods' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p> <p>In response to question, is it feasible / desirable for the next GLA elections, in 2008, to be e-enabled: 'yes, but only for early voting via the internet and telephone. Automated counting should also continue' (Peter Stanyon, Deputy Head of Democratic Services, London Borough of Enfield)</p>

Appendix 7: Principles of London Assembly Scrutiny

An aim for action

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

Independence

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

Holding the Mayor to account

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

Inclusiveness

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

Constructiveness

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

Value for money

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

Appendix 8: Orders and Translations

How to Order

For further information on this report or to order a copy, please contact Janet Hughes, Senior Scrutiny Manager, on 0207 983 4423 or email at janet.hughes@london.gov.uk

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