2016 Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Staff Feedback

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils to gather feedback on the way we administered the Police and Crime Commissioner elections held 6th May 2016.

August 2016
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SUMMARY

This report summarises a consultation undertaken by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils (South and Vale), to gather feedback from staff and people directly involved in the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) election, held 6 May 2016.

The consultation began on 20 May and lasted for a period of four weeks. Two separate online surveys were made available on the council’s website; one aimed at people who staffed the election in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, and another for staff who worked across the Thames Valley area. The surveys posed a number of questions prompting respondents to detail their experiences of the election; from pre-election training to resources provided at the polling stations. We contacted people by email to let them know about the survey.

312 South and Vale elections staff and 34 Thames Valley area elections staff responded to the survey. We found that:

- The large majority of staff were satisfied with their experience of working on the PCC election.
- For respondents who worked on the polling stations, the most common complaint involved staffing; some respondents felt that this election was overstaffed and that some staff were not fulfilling their roles correctly. Suggestions for improvement from this group included; making sure that venues were suitable in terms of size and layout, improving disabled access, allowing election staff to access venues before election day, and ensuring venues are warm.
- For overnight verification and count staff, the most common complaint was to do with timings. Some staff members felt that they were left waiting throughout the election due to insufficient workloads. Respondents thought this could be addressed by managing staff time more efficiently, for example through better delegation of tasks by managers. In addition, count staff thought there could be more parking at the venue and improved signage for the buses to reduce waiting times.
- Some regional staff felt that improvements could be made to the briefings provided to them. Some felt that only one briefing was needed and that information regarding the central count could have been distributed earlier.

Feedback to this consultation has been passed to the Returning Officer and councils’ election team for consideration. The views and suggestions noted will be taken into consideration when planning the delivery of future elections.
BACKGROUND TO THE CONSULTATION

On Friday 6 May 2016, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White District Councils, on behalf of the Returning Officer (RO), administered delivery of the Police and Crime Commissioner election for the Thames Valley area. Turnout was 25.6 per cent in the Thames Valley area.

The councils administered all parts of the election, including: electoral registration, arranging postal and proxy votes, nominations of candidates, management of polling stations, verification and counting of votes and the declaration of results.

To make sure that the election was administered effectively, the councils set up a consultation to canvass feedback from staff. The staff were divided into those who staffed the election in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (presiding officers/poll clerks, overnight verification staff and count staff), and staff who worked across the Thames Valley area (Local Returning Officers (LROs), Electoral Services Manager (ESM), Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) and Count Supervisors).

Candidates and agents of the election were also invited to take part in the consultation. However, only one person responded to the survey therefore the results are not included in this report.
CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

The consultation sought to gather feedback from staff and candidates/agents on how the councils administered the election. Two surveys were published on the council’s online consultation portal; one aimed at South & Vale election staff and one aimed at Thames Valley election staff. In addition, a survey was produced for candidates and agents of the election. However, there was only one respondent to this survey; therefore, these results are not included in this report.

The surveys posed a number of questions tailored to each group which asked about their experience of the elections and suggestions for improvement. Copies of the questions used are presented in Appendix A, B and C.

The consultation began on 20 May and lasted for a period of four weeks. We contacted people by email to let them know about the survey.

M·E·L Research, an independent social research company commissioned by the councils to carry out the surveys on their behalf, analysed all responses which are presented in the next section of this report. This feedback is summarised in the next section of the report. To aid comprehension, this is presented according to respondent type. It covers measures of satisfaction with different aspects of the elections, as well as exploration of the most prevalent free text comments made.

1. [https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal](https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal)
CONSULTATION RESPONSES - SOUTH AND VALE STAFF

312 staff employed by South and Vale responded to the consultation. 247 were Presiding Officers or Poll Clerks, 145 were Count Staff and 38 were Overnight Verification Staff. This equates to 44.2 per cent of overall staff members. Therefore, whilst feedback from these people cannot be understood to represent the views of all staff, it does shine a light on experiences that some staff members had.

As each staff type differed in their involvement with the elections, this section of the report is split into the following to reflect this:

a) Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
b) Overnight Verification Staff
c) Count Staff

Presiding officers and poll clerks

Satisfaction

The majority of staff who responded were satisfied with the way the councils administered the elections. Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents were either fairly or very satisfied with the information about their appointment, role and duties (n=242), regarding beginners/refreshers training (n=148), with the support provided by the councils’ election team (n=213), with the online training (n=218) and with the polling station venue (n=212).

Figure 1: Presiding officers and poll clerks - staff satisfaction
Presiding officers were also asked how satisfied they were with activities specific to their role. Their satisfaction based on these activities is shown in Figure 2. The results show that the majority of presiding officers were very or fairly satisfied with the ease of dropping off ballot boxes at the count venue (n=114), with the grey box folders (n=120), regarding paperwork (n=122), with the ballot box collection (n=115) and with the YouTube briefing (n=123). Only paperwork and the YouTube briefing garnered fairly or very dissatisfied respondents, however the proportion is minimal (n=4 and n=2 respectively).

These ‘at a glance’ results suggest that staff had a positive experience of the elections which is confirmed by the free text comments.

Feedback

Presiding officers and poll clerks were asked if they had any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to their experience of working at the elections. Table 1 details the frequency of comments that respondents made by type.
Satisfaction with elections

The table indicates that most comments were from satisfied staff members, with 52 respondents falling into this category. Many also commented on how enjoyable the day was.

*Was a positive experience, and I'd definitely do it again*
*I found the whole experience very satisfying - felt as though I had made a contribution to the elections - even if only helping the Public to vote. Was member of a great team - had a thoroughly enjoyable day.*

Some respondents also noted that improvements had been made on previous elections, which contributed to their feelings of satisfaction.

*New arrangements with grey box was an improvement.*
*Everything ran very smoothly from my point of view. Particularly, the drop off was very well organised. Many thanks*
*The grey box was a great idea! I liked the log book as it made me feel more confident I'd set up correctly (e.g. signs) and it was good having one place to record notes for elections team. I also really liked the explanation of how to pack up at the close of poll - the instructions were really clear. The ballot box drop off went really smoothly and quickly - didn't have to queue.*

Staffing

Comments around staffing were the second most frequent theme in the free text section, with 12 respondents being categorised here. The most common complaint being that certain staff members were not fulfilling their role fully.

*Not a good idea to have Poll Clerks working in the Town/Village in which they live. Too many distractions from people they know which can lead to errors being made*
*I worked at a polling station with two teams and the other team were horribly slow and incredibly disorganised. They took far too long to do anything and spent over an hour at the polling station after the vote had closed. They also treated voters like idiots going through things in far too much detail.*
*The presiding office spent the day on Right Move and offered no support or help to myself or my fellow poll clerk*
*If I make a telephone enquiry at any stage in the run-up to an election and am promised a return call in order that my enquiry can be answered I expect the return call to be made. It*
wasn’t. I expect the information given to me at the time of my appointment to be correct. It wasn’t.

A few staff commented that there was a lack of staff communication regarding the storing of polling booths at Storton Lodge.

The polling booths for Storton Lodge, Goring were locked away in a cupboard… I eventually got hold of the caretaker, who then came to Storton Lodge with a complete set of keys and was able to look in a locked cupboard where the booths had been put.

Another point raised was that there were too many staff members at this election. Some acknowledged that the staffing levels would have been more appropriate for a general election.

There were far too many staff working at the polling venue, 3 stations each one with 3 clerks – my station handed out 155 voting papers the other two stations did similar. Most of the time we were sitting around with nothing to do. Lots of voters made comments. Only the General Election had 3 stations, previous to that it was 2 stations with 2 members of staff each anything more than that is a waste of manpower.

It is a shameful waste of resources to allocate 2 Poll Clerks to each station for this type of election. There was very little work for 2 people (PO and PC) to do; having 3 people (PO and 2 PCs) was quite ridiculous.

It seemed overkill to have 9 of us assigned to Chinnor Village Hall for that election when a fairly low turnout was expected, and resulted. However, for the Referendum, or a General Election that may well be necessary.

Inadequate facilities

9 respondents were critical of the facilities provided on election day. For example, some respondents commented that the available space at the polling station was inadequate.

The polling station was used for a number of community activities during the day, which meant we were in the smaller, less easy to find hall, and at times users completely blocked the entrance to the polling station, and were utterly unwilling to move. I think the polling station function should take priority over other activities that might be going on, and these should only be allowed to continue on polling day if they will not obstruct or interfere with the legal, democratic operation of the polling station in any way.

…the size of the room we were allocated

Others noted that they expected facilities such as kitchen equipment, ventilation and Wi-Fi, which were not adequate at their polling stations.

…the kitchen facilities were adequate but nothing to write home about. Fortunately had visited the previous day to find NO cutlery or crockery except a pile of cups only.

The Regal Centre has no windows so very oppressive. The only disabled access meant that a double door needed to be open from 7 am to 10pm. So glad it wasn’t a cold day. It would have been helpful to know that I should take my own tea / coffee / milk or advise that none will be available at site.

Venue (Northbourne centre) was extremely cold, even on a warm day. Electricity supply in kitchen is intermittent. Also might be worth letting future staff there know that there is no fridge.

The mobile phone reception at the polling station in Great Milton is poor/non-existent so it means leaving the polling station and walking about 50+metres to get a signal. There is no Wi-Fi in the village hall. I appreciate that you can’t do anything about either issue.

Two respondents also commented that the position of their polling station was prohibitive to disabled and elderly voters.
My Polling Station was on the first floor up a long flight of stairs. There was a lift but this was very slow and unable to deal with the volume of elderly and/or disabled people who wanted to vote but could not manage the stairs. Many members of the public expressed their anger about this.

Only that the polling station being upstairs, despite having lift opportunities, it gave people the chance to have a moan. The polling station staff did their best ensure that anyone with walking difficulties was helped e.g. ones that didn’t like lifts....

Suggested improvements

Presiding officers and poll clerks were asked if they could suggest any improvements for future elections. Table 2 below summarises the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend venues</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More equipment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change timings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change paperwork</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve staffing issues</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information needed</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer online voting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None

35 respondents indicated that they had no suggestions for further improvements. This ranged from those who were completely satisfied with how the council ran the elections, to those who were unsure of how to realistically address any issues which occurred during the elections.

No improvements as everything was set up in advance and well run with experienced presiding officers.

Difficult to say - I think it's a well-oiled ship and thoroughly organised. Well done!

Can't think of anything

Not within the limits of the electoral process.

Amend Venues

5 respondents indicated that in future, improvements could be made so that the venue is suitable for the location.

The station I worked on had 54 electors over the entire day - this makes the cost per vote very high.

Make sure the venue is suitable for a double station if that's its use. Not all rooms are suitable and it can be impossible to make sure ballots end up in the right box if the room can't be partitioned.

Those people voting in Thame it does seem very silly that Roks lane is divided into two different polling stations and the one side go to the guide headquarters and the other side all the way up to the youth centre in Towersey road. This is a very long way out of the town and we received complaints from some who came to the guide HDQS in error.
Check to make sure no other events are happening in the village hall - we had some problems with voters having to share an access corridor with people waiting for a children’s ballet class.

3 respondents highlighted that improvements could be made for disabled access to certain polling station venues.

- Improve disabled access to polling station (Whitchurch on Thames has steps up in front and disabled access is round the side).
- Disabled access is a problem. Long walk from car park and small step into hall. Also sharp turn to enter hut through door may be difficult
- The venue itself was difficult for those with mobility problems who came to vote - no ramp, door not wide enough for wheelchair users to navigate.

5 respondents also indicated that it would be beneficial in future to allow election staff access to venues before election day.

- It would be great if we could access polling stations the evening before to put up signs inside and set up booths and furniture, but I realise this may be difficult as the venue may be in use / booked by other users.
- If a “new” venue, building or location is being used as a polling station the opportunity to visit should be afforded to the polling staff. If not possible photos or a plan for information would be useful for familiarisation. Similarly for new polling staff knowledge of the layout access etc. Would be helpful. [this is based on my past experience of several locations]

Finally, 2 respondents indicated that making sure venues are warm would be beneficial for staff at future elections.

- The venue itself was not good and really cold
- Ensure buildings provided are heated properly - spent all day with a coat on, even though the heaters were on.

More equipment

The need for more or different equipment at election venues was the third most frequent comment. Firstly, 4 staff suggest that improved signage would be beneficial, to reduce confusion for voters and to aid staff in crowd control.

- It would be good to have a large easel we could put a list of streets on; complete with arrows this election was an improvement because we were given a list of streets for each station.
- Voters would benefit from signage to show there are 3 desks and they will need to select their desk by road name, alphabetically. Then a poster of the road allocation to read as they enter the building.
- Consider providing large arrows to place on the outer entrance door where there are multiple poll stations to show preferred movement of people.
- If possible, provide a sandwich board or similar for the polling station signs. We had to tie one around a bush and it kept blowing away.

In addition, 3 staff felt that changes to voting booths would improve future elections.

- More voting booths
  - Provide enough pencils for each booth.
  - Ensure the parish office is closed or bring some sort of divider that is tall enough to make sure no-one can see someone in the booth.

Lastly, 4 staff felt that improving the infrastructure available at venues and the provisions for staff would be of benefit.
Arranging power to mobile units would be very helpful. On numerous occasions over the last few years I, as presiding officer have had to “rig up” power to the unit at the White Hart at Fyfield which is less than satisfactory.

The only potential issue I could see was that we had difficulty getting a signal for our mobile phones. It wasn’t a problem for us on the day but perhaps some back-up arrangement should be made for polling stations with a weak/no mobile phone signal.

Offer free tea, coffee and bottled water whilst on duty. As we cannot leave the building this would be a great help.

Overnight verification staff

Satisfaction

Overnight verification staff took part in different activities compared to other election staff. The results show that the majority of verification staff were very or fairly satisfied with verification assistant instructions sent via email (assistants only) (n=34), with car parking arrangements (n=34), regarding the count venue (n=34), with instructions provided upon arrival at the count (n=32), with information about their appointment, role and duties (n=36) and with the overall organisation (n=34).

![Figure 3: Overnight verification staff satisfaction](image)

The ‘at a glance’ results shown in Figure 3, suggest that the majority of overnight verification staff had a positive experience of the elections. The free text comments confirm this.

Comments

Staff were asked if they had any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to their experience of working as overnight verification staff. Table 3 details the frequency of comments that respondents made by type.
Satisfied

13 respondents indicated that they were satisfied with how the elections were managed by the council. These comments ranged from first-time staff who were impressed with the organisation of the elections, to those who commented on improvements made since last year.

A pleasant experience. Good to participate with likeminded people

This was my first involvement with Vale of White Horse elections and the organisation appeared to be very efficient and extremely well-tuned. Delivery of ballot box was very efficient, with rapid turnaround times. The briefing notes were an excellent improvement on last year.

Timing issues

The second most frequent comment related to timing issues. A number of respondents commented that they were left waiting around for much of the election. Firstly, respondents indicated that they were waiting during the elections.

A lot of time spent hanging around in between sorting ballot papers. There were short bursts of work followed by long periods of standing about. There was a lot of sitting around. I appreciate that this is one of those things.

Secondly, 3 respondents said that there was a delay of up to an hour before they were allowed to go home.

Only that there was a lot of time at the end spent waiting until staff were cleared to go home. I understand some delay while figures are checked, but it took a long time between the end of the counting and being allowed home. We were standing around for an hour before allowed to go. My group was also kept working longer than anyone left doing the easier verification work. This was not what I agreed to and I won't do verification again.

Staffing problems

Some respondents had comments regarding staff issues. One respondent thought there were too many staff for this election.

Did not need so many staff for very low number of ballot papers

Other respondents indicated that the instructions given to staff were inadequate.

I had to ask where I was required in the venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Overnight verification staff comments
We weren’t really given much information on the night. From the people I was sat with, we were expecting a brief run through of what would happen, but we weren’t. The boxes just started to turn up and the first one felt a bit chaotic, especially as it was a postal box and we weren’t expecting those.

Very well organised. However, the verification centre staff had to repeat the instructions that had been sent out to every verification staff prior to the event, and it proved that people had either not read the instructions or failed to take heed. Perhaps everyone should have a concise summary to print out on conclusion of e-learning training which has to be taken to the verification centre, thus saving the official staff valuable time in re-iterating instructions.

Another respondent felt that someone needed to be responsible for certain electoral processes.

There was 1 remaining ballot box at the end of the verification which still had the envelope attached to the top - could someone be responsible for making sure all boxes are empty and envelopes are taken off the top?

Lastly, a respondent was unhappy that they were assigned to a manual labour activity which they were unsuitable for.

The verification of ballots was fine. But I was moved to a manual labour activity after that I hadn’t agreed to and wasn’t suited to because of a physical problem.

Suggested improvements

Staff were asked if they could suggest any improvements for future elections. Table 4 below summarises the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings improvements</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater organisation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better facilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None

8 respondents indicated that they didn’t have any suggestions for improving the running of elections. Two respondents stated that they were satisfied with the running of this election.

For this particular event the organisation appeared to meet all requirements.

The venue was good and keep the team supervisor or team leader role

In comparison, another respondent indicated that although they may not be completely satisfied with the elections, they also could not think of suggestions to improve it.

Cannot think of any

Timings improvements

6 respondents suggested improvements to timings issues faced in this election. One respondent addressed the issue of delays at the end of the elections.
Another respondent indicated that greater time management of staff was needed.

*Less time spent waiting for the next action to take place.*

**Greater organisation**

4 respondents indicated that improved organisation would benefit future elections.

*There's always room for improvement, more organisation required.*

The remaining respondents gave specific suggestions on how to achieve this, through changes in voting systems and improved staff management.

**Computerise voting system**

*Better task management i.e. make sure there are always tasks to be done - when you have been in a poll office all day the sitting around doing nothing at the verification makes it difficult to stay awake*

*Not wait for 7 identical count totals to be made before realising that for the counting team(s) the "computer says no", 7 times is not acceptable and requires looking elsewhere in the system for the source of error! [sic]*

**Count staff**

**Satisfaction**

Count staff took part in different activities to the staff roles detailed previously. 145 Count staff responded to the consultation and their satisfaction levels are shown in Figure 4. The results show that the majority of Count staff were very or fairly satisfied with the training session (supervisors only) (n=80), with information about their appointment, role and duties (n=138), with the count assistant information booklet (n=130), with the YouTube briefing for count assistants (n=109), with the count venue (facilities etc.) (n=137), with the overall organisation (n=138), with the instructions provided to upon arrival at the count (n=129) and regarding car parking arrangements (n=97).
The ‘at a glance’ results, suggest that the majority of Count staff had a positive experience of the elections. The free text comments confirm this.

Comments

Staff were asked if they had any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to their experience of working as Count staff. Table 5 details the frequency of comments that respondents made by type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None/satisfied</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None/satisfied

52 respondents responded that they had no comments, or that they were satisfied with the running of the elections. Praise was given by many respondents, with some noting that improvements have been made.
I have worked as count staff before and have always found the running of the event, from preparation to finish, excellent.
A noticeable improvement in the organisation and instruction. It was a pleasurable experience.
I enjoyed the experience and thought people were very helpful. It was interesting to work with people who were really knowledgeable about the voting process.

Timings

15 respondents commented on issues regarding timings during the election. Firstly, respondents indicated that there was a delay of over an hour before the count started.

… the best part of an hour was wasted as we could have started the supplementary count sooner

The wait at the start was a bit of a pain - I left home quite early to make sure I arrive with plenty of time to get the park and ride. Once we arrive at the count venue, it was around an hour or so wait until anything happened.

We were asked to arrive by 0815 and then didn't commence counting 'till 0945. Why?

Next, some respondents indicated that there were periods of inactivity during the election, which they felt could have been avoided.

There was lots of waiting around for decisions to be made.
At the count there always seems to be lots of waiting time beforehand and in between
...because of the tallying by supervisors. I appreciate that this is part of the process but if it could be speeded up somehow money would be saved in staffing.

This time around there seemed to be a lot of hanging around - waiting for more papers to be counted.

There were long periods of time when lots of people had nothing to do. We were not kept informed of the reasons for this or how much time we were likely to have for lunch, etc. Our supervisor seemed to be very unwilling to let us go at the end of the count although we had buses to catch.

Lastly, some respondents commented that there were delays at the end of the election day.

Again there were lots of delays after the end of the counting to being allowed to leave.

…why did it take so long between us finishing counting and the results being announced?

Nearly 2 hours waiting for results that instigated a second count

In contrast, one respondent stated that the waiting times described above are to be expected with this role.

Time passed pleasantly. Periods of inactivity, but that is the nature of the beast.

Facilities

11 respondents replied with comments regarding facilities at polling stations. The majority of respondents in this category praised the refreshments provided at the venues.

Water, biscuits + chocolate were very welcomed.

Very much appreciated the provision of water, coffee and a choc bar. Thanks
I really appreciate the free tea / coffee on arrival - thank you.

In comparison, there were negative comments surrounding the toilets at the venue, suggesting that these were inadequate.
No one had thought of provision of toilets - there was a lot of queueing

More ladies toilets needed

With the number of staff working on the count there was a need for better toilet facilities and I had to report lack of supplies, soap and toilet paper in ladies. Too few in general - maybe get some temporary toilets in car park

Suggested improvements

Staff were asked if they could suggest any improvements for future elections. Table 6 below summarises these responses.

### Table 6: Count staff suggested improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None needed</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to voting procedures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**None needed**

As shown in Table 6, the majority of respondents were satisfied with how the elections were run and had no suggestions for improvements.

*No improvements needed*

*I feel its fine as it is.*

*Having been an RO and PARO I have to say the organisation was very good and you should be proud of the organisation of the count*

**Transport**

The second largest category of comments was regarding transport. Many respondents had issues with waiting for buses, which could be improved by increasing the number of buses in future.

*The bus didn’t leave ‘till it was full which added a further 20 minutes wait to an already long day.*

*The bus from Milton Park worked very well, except we had a long wait to return as some people were still involved in counting and it took a long time for them to be released to enable them to get on the bus.*

*More regular shuttle buses to and from venue. we had to wait a long time going to and leaving the venue*

Other respondents indicated that the visibility of buses could be improved.

*Mark up the buses with the destinations on leaving the count!!*

*Parked at Milton park then bus. The bus was not visible from car park, had no signs where to go. Was only one bus, had to wait for quite a while for it to go and come back.*

*Please mark up the coaches on leaving the count with the destinations; it was very challenging after a day looking at ballot papers! Thanks*
Some respondents said that the elections could be improved by having parking at the venue.

Such a pity it is not possible to park at venue. I appreciate the difficulties, but a bus system necessitates that everyone is back on the bus before you can leave.

Car parking in field nearby as we wasted a lot of time waiting for buses when most of us had worked a 17 hr day the day before.

There were many empty car spaces at the count yet we were not permitted to park there.

Lastly, improving the signage at car parks and improving communications regarding parking prior to elections would be beneficial.

Parking. It would have been helpful to have a big sign saying ELECTION STAFF on Park Drive. I found the parking for the bus from Milton Park difficult to locate. The map on the letter was small and blurred and photocopied in black and white so that the 'red arrow' was impossible to find.

I know some people found the directions to the council offices a bit vague - I thought it was okay as I had a good check of Google maps the night before as I was worried about getting lost! I did think the map could have been a little clearer (cannot remember whether it stated that the car park was opposite the council buildings / the name of the road the car park was on). Provide contact details of those coming from the same area.

**Facilities**

8 respondents said that improvements could be made to the facilities at the polling venues. Firstly, improvements to available refreshments were highlighted.

Water should be on hand

Issue two tickets for refreshments to help staff issue 2 hot drinks. The wrist bands worked very well and the biscuits/chocolate was appreciated.

Don't take the chocolates away!

Possibly only supply water and not chocolate - there was not enough to go round and people could always bring their own

Other respondents suggested improvements for signs and announcements at the polling venue.

A better PA system - from where I was, the announcements made by the Returning Officer and others had so much distortion (echo?) they could not be understood.

Signs from car parking to entrance door and on to Hall were absent. Confirming venue entrance point with LARGE sign would help avoid the need to keep asking security staff. For regulars this might not be so much of an issue and this comment may also apply more to the verification count, applying to the hours of darkness. End the long queues to sign in and OUT by sellotaping the name list sheets separately down across a large number of tables.

Need to have signs to the toilets!
CONSULTATION RESPONSES - THAMES VALLEY STAFF

34 members of the PCC election staff responded to the consultation, of which 24 were Deputy Returning Officer or Count Supervisor at the centralised count, and 11 were Local Returning officer or Electoral Services Manager. This equates to approximately 47.2 per cent of staff involved with the elections. Whilst the feedback in this report cannot be understood to represent the views of all staff, it does highlight the experiences that some staff members had.

As each staff type differed in their involvement with the elections, this section of the report is split into:

a) Local Returning Officers (LRO) and Electoral Servicers Managers (ESM)

b) Deputy Returning Officers (DRO) and Count Supervisors at the centralised count

c) Qualitative feedback from all PCC election staff

LRO & ESM staff

Satisfaction

It appears that the majority of LROs and ESMs were generally satisfied with how the council administered the elections. Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall organisation of the elections (n=11). The areas which proved to be the most satisfactory were briefing 1 (n=9), briefing 2 (n=10) and the instructions for preparing mini count boxes (n=11).

![Figure 5: LROs and ESMs Election Satisfaction](image)

Very satisfied  | Satisfied  | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  | Fairly dissatisfied  | Very dissatisfied
The majority of staff were generally satisfied with the communications surrounding the PCC elections. **Figure 6** shows that the majority of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the process of publishing notices (n=10), the regional communications campaign (n=7) and the regional communications organisation (n=8).

![Figure 6: Election Staff Communications Satisfaction](image)

- **Process of publishing notices**: 36% Very satisfied, 55% Satisfied, 9% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 9% Fairly dissatisfied, 9% Very dissatisfied
- **Regional communications campaign**: 36% Very satisfied, 27% Satisfied, 36% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 0% Fairly dissatisfied, 0% Very dissatisfied
- **Regional communications organisation**: 36% Very satisfied, 36% Satisfied, 27% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 0% Fairly dissatisfied, 0% Very dissatisfied
- **Thames Valley Police website**: 29% Very satisfied, 14% Satisfied, 57% Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 0% Fairly dissatisfied, 0% Very dissatisfied
DRO & count supervisor

Satisfaction

The majority of DRO & Count Supervisors were generally satisfied with the PCC elections. Figure 7 below shows that the majority of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the supervisor and DRO training (n=23), the arrangements made for counting staff from the authority (n=17), the count venue (n=22), supervisor/DRO instruction booklet (n=23), the support offered by PARO/DPARO/floating DROs (n=16), the management and organisation of the count (n=19), the clarity of the count paperwork (n=19), and availability of election results (n=19).

These ‘at a glance’ results suggest that the PCC election largely elicited positive experiences from staff.
Comments

Staff were asked if they had any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to their experience of the regional aspect of the PCC elections. Table 7 details the frequency of comments that respondents made by type.

| Table 7: Count staff suggested improvements |
|---------------------------------------------|---------|
| Comment type                       | Frequency |
| Briefings                         | 3        |
| Satisfied                         | 2        |
| Central count                     | 2        |

Briefings

Two respondents provided constructive criticism for the briefings, indicating that condensing the briefings to one day would be more convenient for staff and that more content may be needed to cater for the differing experiences of staff.

*Having to attend two briefings was a bit much (very long drive in both directions) especially as it was mainly someone just reading out the PowerPoint presentations. Just one would have been enough I think and just send the slides through please.*

*The briefings were fine - a little light on content, but I think that was due to the experience of those attending, not a reflection on the RRO.*

Linked to this is one respondents’ comment that pre-briefing information would have been appreciated at an earlier stage.

*Would have liked some information sooner (e.g. central count information) but I also appreciate the difficulties of organising and coordinating arrangements across 16 local authorities.*

Satisfied

Respondents gave positive comments regarding the elections, especially with the support provided by Staff 1.

*Not really, I had no issues or concerns and all was clear, or became so when it needed to.*
*Response to questions was quick.*

*[Staff 1] was very helpful and promptly responded to any issues.*

*[Staff 1] was exceptionally helpful and patient. Well done.*

Central count

Regarding the running of the PCC election day, one respondent commented on difficulties surrounding the transfer of verified papers.

*My only comment is about the dropping off of the verified papers. It seemed very controlled, sending texts when on way, ETA at count venue etc. but when we arrived there was no-one to directly meet us and those around didn’t seem interested. Apparently the people waiting for us were actually inside the venue not hanging around the white tent outside. A very small point but the dropping off instructions could have been clearer on that.*
Additionally, one respondent questioned the value of having a central count.

The organisation was fine but I’m afraid I wasn’t convinced by the regional count which appeared to me to be a regional venue. I accept that having the PCC only of course influences my interpretation but from a purely selfish stance I could not see any value of the central count decision for us.

Suggested improvements

Staff were asked if they could suggest any improvements regarding the management of the count. Table 8 below summarises these responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: Count staff suggested improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralised count</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfied

14 respondents were satisfied with how the count was managed.

All handled very well, congratulations.

Overall I thought it all ran like clockwork and it was evident that everything behind the scenes was very well organised and nothing had been left to chance. As a count supervisor I really enjoyed it.

Some respondents indicated that the elections defied their expectations.

I originally thought that the count would be a nightmare with the first & second preference choices however, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The venue was well organised and set out.

I enjoyed it even though I disagreed in principle to it being held - well done though, it was nice to get it out of the way!!!!

Others congratulated specific team members for their contribution.

…I would congratulate [Staff 1] on her efforts, and her Team, which showed that all their detailed pre-planning paid off on the day itself.

The training delivered by [Staff 1] was really good and it did all make sense on the day, the handbook was also very good.

It was also very well organised and managed by Vale and South who are lucky to have such a large venue available in their area. Special credit to [Staff 2] and [Staff 1] for delivering on their vision for a central count!
Facilities

6 respondents gave feedback regarding facilities at the polling station. Some indicated that the refreshments provided were not adequate which impacted on queuing times.

- Only providing one drink for the day potentially impacted motivation of count staff.
- ...staff giving out the biscuits and refreshments were abrupt
- Chocolate bars extremely welcome by counters. More coffee outlets would have saved queueing time.
- It is a really minor point and my only negative but the provision of tea and coffee wasn't great, when we arrived there was no milk and the water was cold but it was more of an issue for the count staff as when they arrived there was a big queue - more stations would have been better.

Another respondent commented on the toilet facilities

- I always find it frustrating when there aren't enough toilets provided but I appreciate the limitations of using a public building.

Regarding staff facilities, two respondents indicated that although stationary was excellent, sign in sheets could be improved.

- The stationary and paperwork was very well thought out in terms of the provisions for each count supervisor etc. - everything had been thought of.
- I'd suggest team sign in sheets rather than section sheets as the large queues when we were ready to leave made our departure chaotic.

Room size

Two respondents were dissatisfied with the size of the PCC venue. One respondent indicated that the room was too large.

- It was such a huge room that I could not really tell much about what was happening elsewhere, so I wasn't really sure whether one of the aims of moving resources to help in areas with problems was either necessary or achieved

In contrast, another respondent said that their room was too small which resulted in security risks due to the layout of the room.

- The Count venue was too small and the layout suffered as a result of that. The DRO table was in the wrong location as doubtful ballot papers were exposed, being sited on the main thoroughfare. This risk was heightened as the DRO could not remain at the table due to the other roles required to be performed. Although overall things went reasonably well it is considered that the Count venue was too small and the layout suffered as a result of that.

Communications feedback

Staff were asked if they had any specific comments regarding communications of the PCC elections. The 4 respondents who gave feedback in this area indicated that they had no comments.
HOW WE HAVE USED RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

Feedback to this consultation has been shared with the Returning Officer and councils’ elections team for consideration.

This report will also be presented to the councils’ Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committees in September 2016. The committees are able to make recommendations for improving the delivery of elections in the future.

The councils’ elections team will prepare an action plan for delivering on these recommendations.
FURTHER INFORMATION

For information about the consultation or the results presented in this report, please contact:

Phillip Vincent

Corporate Consultation Officer

Corporate Strategy

South Oxfordshire District Council & The Vale of White Horse District Council

Email: phillip.vincent@southandvale.gov.uk

Phone: 01235 422154
Elections, May 2016. Staff feedback

You have been sent this survey as you helped us with the elections held in May.

We would like your views on how we managed the elections, drawing on your experience of working at a polling station, verification or the count.

The feedback you provide will help us understand if we can make any improvements to the way we manage elections in the future.

Please click on the "Next" button below when you are ready to start.

**YOUR ROLE**

Q1 First of all, in what capacity did you help us with the elections? [Please tick all that apply]
- Presiding Officer or Poll Clerk [Go to Q2]
- Overnight Verification [Go to Q5]
- Count staff [Go to Q8]

**POLLING STATIONS**

Q2 With regards to your experience of working as polling station staff, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information about your appointment, role and duties</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youtube briefing (for Presiding Officers training)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Face-to-face beginners/refreshers training on 5 May (if attended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballot box collection (Presiding Officers only)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Grey Box folders (Presiding Officers only)

Paperwork: Contents List for ballot box, Close of poll instructions and Polling Station Log book (Presiding Officers only)

Polling station venue (facilities etc)

Support provided by the council’s election team

Ease of dropping off ballot boxes at the count venue (Presiding Officers only)

Q3 Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of working as polling station staff?

Q4 What improvements, if any, can the council make to the running of polling stations in the future?

THE VERIFICATION - THURSDAY EVENING

Q5 With regards to your experience of working as verification staff, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information about your appointment, role and duties</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verification assistant instructions sent via email. (assistants only)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction provided to you upon arrival at the count</td>
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<tr>
<td>Count venue (facilities etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Car parking arrangements</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Q9 Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of working as count staff?

Q10 What improvements, if any, can the council make to the organisation of the count in the future?

FURTHER CONTACT

Q11 Would you like to discuss any of the feedback you have provided in more detail?
   ○ Yes (please provide your contact details on the next page)
   ○ No

   If ‘yes’, an officer will get back to you, but please note this will not be until after the EU Referendum on 23 June. If you have any urgent feedback please contact the election team directly at electionstaff@southandvale.gov.uk.

Q12 Would you like to be kept informed about other consultations being undertaken by South and Vale District Councils?
   ○ Yes (please provide your contact details on the next page)
   ○ No

Q13 Please provide contact details below:
   Name
   Phone
   Email

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your feedback. Please click on the "Submit" button now.
# APPENDIX B – Thames Valley Consultation Feedback Form

## Elections, May 2016

Local Returning officers, Electoral Services Managers, Deputy Returning officers and Count Supervisors

You have been sent this survey as you were a Local Returning Officer (LRO), Electoral Services Manager (ESM), Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) or Count Supervisor at the PCC Elections held in May.

We would like your views on how we managed the elections, drawing on your experiences.

The feedback you provide will help us understand if we can make any improvements to the way we manage elections in the future.

*Please click “Next” when you are ready.*

### YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Q1 In what capacity were you involved in the elections? - TICK ALL THAT APPLY

- [ ] Local Returning officer or Electoral Services Manager
- [ ] Deputy Returning Officer or Count Supervisor at the centralised count on 6 May

### LRO/ESM SATISFACTION

Q2 With regards to your experience as a Local Returning Officer or Electoral Services Manager, how satisfied were you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Briefing 1- introduction</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Briefing 2- update</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplementary instructions provided in conjunction with briefings</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support provided to you by the PARO/DPARO</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision to hold a centralised count</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly satisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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</table>
**LRO/ESM SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNICATIONS**

**Q3** With regards to your experience as a Local Returning Officer or Electoral Services Manager, how satisfied were you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional communications organisation</td>
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<td>Regional communications campaign</td>
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<td>Thames Valley Police website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process of publishing notices</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**YOUR COMMENTS**

**Q4** Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of how the regional aspect of the election was managed?

**Q5** Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of how the count was managed?

**Q6** Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of how the regional communications was managed?
Q7 With regards to your experience as a Deputy Returning Officer or Count supervisor, how satisfied were you with the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor and DRO Training</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Fairly dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrangements made for counting staff from your authority (if provided)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervisor/DRO instruction booklet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Count Venue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity of the count paperwork</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support offered by PARO/DPARO/floating DRO’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of election results</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and organisation of the count</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

YOUR COMMENTS

Q8 Do you have any specific comments, either positive or negative, with regards to your experience of how the count was managed?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please click on the "Submit" button below.