

## Members' Library Service Request Form

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Originator	Kirstie Macneil, Service Manager - People & Governance
Originator's Ref (if any)	
Document Title	File 662 - Creation of an Election Assistant

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Designation	HoS
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**STAFFING REPORT – NEW POST**

**REPORT TO:** Members' Library Service

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive – Resources and People Services

**DATE:**

**SUBJECT:** Staffing Report for the Creation of an  
Elections Assistant within People and Governance

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**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek Head of Council Resources approval under delegated powers for the creation of an Elections Assistant as a permanent change to the staffing structure.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To agree to the proposed changes to the staffing structure as outlined in the report.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 East Lothian Council has a responsibility to organise and manage the process for elections, including local government, Scottish Parliament, UK Parliament elections, and referendums. For a number of years, a core team of staff (hereafter referred to as the Election Team), supported by a number of other officers, has been brought together during active election periods to carry out all duties in respect of elections, under the direction of the Returning Officer and Depute Returning Officer.
- 3.2 Up until recently, the three Election Team members all had election duties included within their job outlines. However, due to retirement and structural changes within the People & Governance service, there are now only two officers with election duties as part of their core duties. Given the volume of work required to be carried out during an active election period, it is proposed that a third member of the Election Team is appointed on an internal secondment basis, i.e. they would be brought into the Team as and when required for each election/referendum event. This would normally be for a period of 6-12 weeks for each election/referendum event (depending on the nature of the event). As it stands, there is planned election activity in May 2021

(Scottish Parliament), May 2022 (Local Government) and December 2024 (UK Government), although this is subject to change.

3.3 During active election periods, the Election Team is focused on election duties on a full-time basis and is based in the Election Office in John Muir House, so the successful candidate would need to be released from their normal duties for the duration of active election periods (including the week following the election), with the agreement of their line manager/service manager.

3.4 The creation of this post will not impact on any other parts of the People and Governance Service structure.

3.5 The Job Evaluation Team have evaluated this post of Elections Assistant as Grade 6 (£22,501 - £24,600) per annum (excluding on-costs).

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

## **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

## **6 DISCLOSURE SCOTLAND REQUIREMENT**

6.1 This post will require a Basic Disclosure check in order to comply with legislation/PSN Code of Connection.

## **7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Financial – The post would be funded through election monies allocated to the Council in respect of Scottish and UK Parliament elections. Local Government elections are not eligible for Government financial support, so funding for the post will be sought from the Head of Council Resources for the Local Government election of 2022.

7.2 Personnel – This post has been formally evaluated and will be advertised internally on a secondment basis, and is subject to review following each election period. After the Election the Jobholder will revert back to their substantive post within the Authority.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Agreed Job Details Form

<b>AUTHOR'S NAME</b>	<b>Kirstie MacNeill</b>
<b>DESIGNATION</b>	Service Manager – People and Governance
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<b>DATE</b>	<b>25 November 2020</b>

## JOB DETAILS FORM

JOB OUTLINE	
<b>JOB TITLE:</b> Elections Assistant	<b>JET CODE:</b> 7370
<b>SERVICE:</b> People and Governance	
<b>DIVISION:</b> Council Resources	
<b>REPORTING TO:</b> Team Leader – Democratic Services	
<b>RESPONSIBLE FOR:</b> n/a	
<p><b>JOB PURPOSE:</b></p> <p>To assist with the Council's administration of elections for all elections and referendums administered by the Council.</p>	
<p><b>MAIN DUTIES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist with the planning and administration of UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Local Government and Community Council elections, and referendums.</li> <li>• Liaise with candidates, agents, the Electoral Commission, Electoral Registration Office, Electoral Management Board, Police, other council departments (e.g. Property Maintenance) and the general public, including the provision of guidance on aspects of the electoral process, in accordance with Electoral Commission guidance and relevant legislation.</li> <li>• Produce written materials, such as nomination packs for candidates, training materials for staff, information and guidance for the Contact Centre Helpline, and information for the public, and explain these materials to various stakeholders</li> <li>• Deal independently with any issues that may arise and make decisions on a range of issues (for example, information to area offices, materials for polling staff, election pages on the Council's website)</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance to members of the public on election-related matters</li> <li>• Assist with the recruitment and training of temporary election staff, including poll staff, postal vote staff, count staff and other ad hoc staff, e.g. security staff</li> <li>• Prepare and publish official notices, such as the notice of poll and notice of election</li> </ul>	

- Proofread documentation, including ballot papers and postal vote statements
- Operate the postal voting system, including scanning of postal vote statements, and verifying and making decisions on validity of personal identifiers
- Receive and check nomination papers and deposit payments (if applicable)
- Organise security for ballot papers/postal ballots/polling day receipt of ballot boxes/count
- Create, update and maintain the election page on the Council's website
- On polling day: be on duty to provide advice and information (from 6.30 am until the completion of the count); organise logistics of ballot boxes being returned from polling stations to the count centre; process postal votes throughout the day and, at close of poll, those returned to polling stations; attend count to provide guidance and information to candidates and agents; on completion of the count, securely package ballot papers and official documents in readiness to transfer them to secure storage
- Any other appropriate duties, as requested by the Returning Officer, Depute Returning Officer or Team Leader – Democratic Services, commensurate with the grade for the post.

## ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS ROLE

### Qualifications/Experience:

- Educated to HNC/SVQ Level 3 or equivalent in business administration or other relevant subject with previous experience of working in a local authority or other complex organisation along an understanding of the electoral process.

### Disclosure Scotland:

- This role requires **Basic Disclosure Clearance** to allow access to the Public Sector Network. ELC will submit a Police Act Disclosure application on behalf of the preferred candidate and receipt of the subsequent certificate will be **required prior to commencement**.

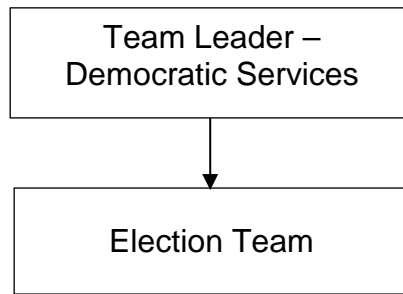
### Scottish Social Services Council:

- None.

**TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Elections Team comprises a number of officers who come together before and during active election periods to plan and manage all aspects for all elections for which the Council has responsibility.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**



PERSON SPECIFICATION		
Attributes	Essential	Desirable
Education, Registration & Training	<p>HNC level or equivalent in business administration or other relevant subject, or evidence of comparable experience and training</p> <p>This role requires <b>Basic Disclosure Clearance</b> to allow access to the Public Sector Network. ELC will submit a Police Act Disclosure application on behalf of the preferred candidate and receipt of the subsequent certificate will be <b>required prior to commencement</b>.</p>	Certificate in Electoral Administration (awarded by the Associated of Electoral Administrators)
Previous Experience (Paid & Voluntary Work)	<p>Administrative experience, in a local government setting or other complex organisation.</p> <p>Previous experience of working to procedures.</p>	<p>Experience of election-related work</p> <p>Experience of working in a political environment</p> <p>Customer services experience</p>
Knowledge/ Skills /Competencies	<p>Knowledge and understanding of election processes</p> <p>Sound numerical and analytical skills</p> <p>Effective verbal and written communication skills</p> <p>High standard of written English</p> <p>Effective organisational and time management skills</p> <p>Skilled user of Microsoft Office Suite such as Word, Excel, Outlook etc.</p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of electoral legislation and Electoral Commission guidance</p>



<p>Personal Qualities</p>	<p>Ability to demonstrate political neutrality Ability to use own initiative</p> <p>Ability to multi-task</p> <p>Ability to work to a high degree of accuracy, paying close attention to detail</p> <p>Ability to investigate and resolve problems</p> <p>Ability to prioritise work under pressure and to meet deadlines</p> <p>Ability to establish positive relationships with Elected Members, senior managers, staff and external partners</p> <p>Ability to work flexibly as part of a team</p> <p>Ability to exercise confidentiality, diplomatic skills and political impartiality in dealing with a range of stakeholders</p>	
<p>Council Behaviours</p>	<p>We are Customer Focussed</p> <p>We Initiate and Embrace Change</p> <p>We Strive to be the Best we can be</p> <p>We make things Happen</p> <p>We work Together</p>	

## FACTOR LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

### **WORKING ENVIRONMENT:**

The Jobholder will work predominantly indoors in an office setting, but may require to travel to other locations, e.g. polling stations. Any outdoor work would account for less than 10% of working time. S/he is likely to be accompanied on any outdoor visits. No special equipment or protective clothing would be required.

### **PHYSICAL CO-ORDINATION:**

The Jobholder would mainly require to use physical co-ordination to operate a keyboard and mouse when undertaking computing activities, such as typing and data entry (using the Microsoft Office package, and specialist software associated with election work). This would require a considerable level of precision and a typing speed of c. 50 words per minute. In the weeks leading up to an election it is extremely busy and time critical, working to strict timetables/deadlines and therefore speed & accuracy are essential.

The Jobholder is also required to operate the postal voting system, including scanning of postal vote statements, and verifying and making decisions on validity of personal identifiers

### **PHYSICAL EFFORT:**

The job requires a high level of lifting and carrying, e.g. full ballot boxes, furniture, cases containing polling station equipment. Such a level of lifting/carrying would be required before, during and after polling day, including the set-up of and during the count, and may account for up to 30% of working time.

### **MENTAL SKILLS:**

In the course of normal working, the Jobholder would be required to resolve problems or situations by applying existing rules, procedures or instructions. Judgement may be required to resolve some problems; more complex problems would be escalated to the line manager. Problems are likely to be of a similar nature, within a single discipline.

The Jobholder is required to resolve queries from stakeholders, eg Candidates & Agents, Police, internal depts. (such as Roads, Contact Centre, Property Maintenance) etc.

Elections are led by key dates/legislation, ie dates for applying to be on the Register/dates for applying for absent voting, dates for candidates submitting nominations, etc. This information is found in legislation and the Electoral Commission's Guidance for Returning Officers and advice from the EMB. If the Jobholder is unsure of an answer calls can be made to the Electoral Commission or EMB for clarification.

The Jobholder would be required to schedule activities 6-8 weeks in advance eg staff recruitment/staff training/delivery of equipment to polling places/count venue etc. Deadlines for such activities would not be flexible due to the nature of the post and the associated statutory timescales.

An election action plan is drawn up in advance of each election, with specific actions allocated to the Jobholder.

**CONCENTRATION:**

On a day-to-day basis, the Jobholder would be required to demonstrate mental concentration for 1-2 hours at a time, and it is deadlines which would create the most pressure for them. These deadlines are pre-determined and externally imposed, and the Jobholder would have little, if any, control over them.

The Jobholder would be required to produce written materials, such as training/guidance notes, letters, recruitment packs and nomination packs.

Concentration may be broken by phone calls, or the need to assist other team members with other tasks.

**COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS:**

The Jobholder's communications on a day-to-day basis would be spoken or written. The most demanding type of communication is likely to be explaining information to people who are unfamiliar with the subject ie calls from members of the public regarding registration/absent voting/voting at polling places/candidates & agents.

Sound verbal communications skills are required in order to provide clear advice and explanations to individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. Such advice may be complex and confidential which will require the Jobholder to explain legislation, electoral processes and procedures ie queries from members of the public on registration, absent voting, proxy votes, which elections s/he can participate in etc.

S/he will also provide advice and guidance to candidates and agents in relation to registration, deadlines, procedures before, during and after the election.

A high level of written English would be required, as the Jobholder will be involved in preparing guidance for polling staff, candidates, agents, other public agencies, and members of the public. Guidance and procedures are reviewed for each Election will be updated accordingly based on current legislation and guidance received from Electoral Commission and EMB.

**DEALING WITH RELATIONSHIPS:**

The Jobholder may have to deal with members of the public who are upset, threatening or otherwise demanding. The Jobholder will frequently deal with calls from disgruntled voters. Callers can be extremely frustrated/angry and unwilling to accept the rules.

Such contact is likely to be in writing or on the telephone. Dealing directly with these people may take up to 10% of working time.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEES:**

The Jobholder would not have line management responsibility. However, S/he may be required to supervise and check the work of staff involved in certain activities, e.g. postal vote opening ensuring that processes are being completed correctly and offering advice & guidance on any electoral process. S/he will also assist with the training of polling staff.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR SERVICES TO OTHERS:**

The Jobholder would have a degree of responsibility in ensuring that the administration of elections is conducted in accordance with legislation, best practice and national guidelines. For example, they would be involved in ensuring that polling station staff have the necessary materials to carry out their duties, organising the return of ballot boxes from polling stations to the count centre; processing postal votes; and providing guidance and information to candidates and agents both in advance of election day and at the count.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCES:**

The Jobholder would be required to process invoices and order supplies from external providers. S/he will order ballot box seals/stationery/polling place equipment/count venue equipment/printing/vehicle hire. This would be done several times a week leading up to an election.

S/he will also be required to check financial transactions undertaken by others ie deposits paid by candidates/Payments for poll staff/postal vote staff/count staff etc.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR PHYSICAL AND INFORMATION RESOURCES:**

The Jobholder would be responsible for both physical and electronic information relating to all types of election; this information may be confidential, sensitive and/or personal in nature, and accessible to only a small number of staff within the Elections Team.

The Jobholder would also be responsible for ordering and maintaining supplies of stationery and other election-related materials. S/he would be involved in ensuring that the election pages on the Council website are kept up-to-date.

On completion of the count, the Jobholder would be responsible for securely packaging ballot papers and other official documents for transfer to secure storage.

**INITIATIVE & INDEPENDENCE:**

The Jobholder would be required to demonstrate initiative in the course of normal working.

They would generally be following established procedures and would be expected to deal personally with routine problems. Advice and guidance would generally be available from the line manager as required. S/he will also contact the Electoral Commission for any advice & guidance which is not readily available. The Line Manager is responsible for allocating the Jobholders workload.

**KNOWLEDGE:**

HNC level or equivalent in business administration or other relevant subject, or evidence of comparable experience and training. A Certificate in Electoral Administration would be desirable, but not essential.

The jobholder would be expected to demonstrate sound administrative skills through previous work experience in a large organisation. Previous experience of election work (e.g. polling staff or count staff) and knowledge of the election process would be beneficial.

**AUTHORISATION:**

I have read the information contained in this document and confirm that it is an accurate reflection of the duties and responsibilities for this post.

**Jobholder\***

Signed ..New Post – n/a..... Date .....

**Line Manager**

Signed ...Jill Totney (COVID-19, unable to sign) Date  
...13.11.2020.....

**Service Manager**

Signed .....Kirstie MacNeill (COVID-19 unable to sign).... Date  
.....13.11.20