



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2026 to 2027

Overview of the Service

The service aims to provide effective and high-quality electoral registration, conduct elections, manage committee administration, and support members. Additionally, the service aims to promote community engagement by enhancing understanding of the Council's democratic processes.

Democratic Services covers the following functions:

- Committee administration, along with procedural advice and guidance
- Member support, which encompasses members' allowances, representation on outside bodies, maintenance of registers of members' interests, and the publication of agendas, minutes, and member information on the Council's website
- Induction, training, and development for members
- Electoral registration
- Conducting elections

Most of the service's activities are defined by legislation and guided by statutory and non-statutory frameworks. These activities involve collaboration with a wide range of internal and external partners. This includes councillors, lead officers, service leads, report authors for committees, as well as organisations such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission, the County Council, neighbouring councils, parish councils, the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP), the Local Government Association (LGA), the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO), and the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA).

The committee and member support service is essential for the smooth functioning of the full Council and its committees. It offers efficient, professional meeting support, including administrative assistance, guidance, advice, and training for both councillors and officers on all aspects of the democratic process. This responsibility was enhanced in October 2015 when the Democratic Services and Elections Manager (DSEM) was appointed Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO). The DMO focuses explicitly on providing procedural information and advice and maintaining and updating the Constitution.

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Following the establishment of the Council's trading companies, the team provides clerking services for the ECTC and ECSS Boards and their associated bodies. These services operate under Company Law, are separate from the Council's governance processes, and are provided on a rechargeable basis. Additionally, the team offers clerking for the Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board. Careful attention is paid to maintaining a clear distinction between the roles of the Boards and the Council and their respective shareholder functions.

Staff movement over the year:

In April 2025, the Trainee Electoral Services Assistant successfully completed her career-grade post/AEA examinations and was appointed as an Electoral Services Officer.

In September 2025, the Electoral Services Team Leader retired, leaving the role vacant.

In March 2025, following the successful completion of the recruitment process for the Trainee Democratic Services Role, Local Government Review was announced, and the chosen candidate withdrew their application, leaving the role vacant.

It has been decided to leave both positions open, as they may need to be backfilled during the LGR process.

To maintain service continuity in the meantime, the Electoral Services Officer has knowledge and experience of Democratic Services work, having previously held the role, and the Senior Democratic Services Officer has undertaken a Foundation Course in Electoral Services and can now support election processes. This experience benefits both officers as they prepare for future roles within the new unitary Authority, broadening their knowledge and skills.

During the past year, following the decision not to re-recruit a new trainee, the Democratic Services Team of two has maintained full-service delivery of committee administration, ensuring that all committees were legally convened, minuted and published within legally set timescales.

One of the team's ongoing initiatives is to reduce paper use and move towards a more sustainable, paperless approach to meetings. The team has finally succeeded in reducing paper use with the help of Members and Officers, sending electronic committee documents, including exempt papers, and providing links instead of extra paperwork. The team will continue to encourage the use of electronic documents to further reduce paper use.

During the past year, the Elections Team has operated in a period of transition and sustained operational demand. Following the Team Leader's retirement in September, the remaining officers maintained full-service delivery, took on additional responsibilities, and ensured the continuity of statutory functions.

A significant achievement during this period was the successful implementation of the Witcham Neighbourhood Review (NPR), which required careful planning, stakeholder

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coordination, and detailed administrative oversight. Alongside this, the team responded to legislative changes relating to postal voting, including the introduction of a requirement for postal voters to renew their signature every three years. This change generated a substantial volume of additional correspondence, processing, and elector engagement, placing increased pressure on resources while maintaining strict statutory deadlines.

In addition to these headline activities, the team continued to deliver core electoral services, including maintaining the electoral register, processing rolling registration applications, managing arrangements for absent voting, supporting statutory reporting requirements, handling elector enquiries, and preparing systems and documentation to ensure the team remained election-ready. The annual canvass and ongoing data integrity checks also remained priorities to safeguard the register's accuracy

The service is operating during a period of significant organisational change driven by the implementation of LGR (local government reorganisation). Officers are supporting governance planning and organisational readiness while continuing to deliver statutory democratic services and scheduled electoral activity. This includes participation in an expanding programme of internal and cross-authority meetings, with regular fortnightly coordination sessions reflecting the increasing requirement for specialist democratic services input at an early stage of programme development. Balancing business-as-usual responsibilities with transformation activity is increasing workload and complexity, and maintaining robust, transparent decision-making throughout this period of change remains a core priority for the service.

Two vacant posts are currently being held to maintain workforce flexibility during a period of increased demand and uncertainty. This enables targeted backfilling of critical roles, supports additional governance and transformation activity and helps protect the continuity of statutory democratic and electoral services.

The service will actively monitor capacity and resilience to ensure statutory responsibilities and governance standards are maintained as transformation demands increase

Cost of service

The cost to run the service from 2026 to 2027 totals £801,263 per annum, including staffing costs. This is broken down as follows:

- members' and committee support - £724,897
- electoral services - £50,644

Key areas of expenditure in these budgets are:

- members allowances - £336,109
- member training - £4,722
- members ICT - £7,000
- electoral registration - £50,644
- elections - £25,000

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The costs of external elections are recharged to the relevant body. A sum of £25,000 is put into an election reserve each year to cover the cost of district council elections, which take place every four years. Any district council by-election is an additional cost to this Council.

Staffing Information

The service currently comprises six staff:

Democratic Services and Elections Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (DSEM & DMO)

Senior Democratic Services Officer (SDSO)

Trainee Democratic Services Officer (DSO) – Vacant

Electoral Services Team Leader (ESTL) - Vacant

Electoral Services Officer (ESO)

Electoral Services Officer (ESO)

Planning for Councillors

Proposed item	Proposed date of decision	Committee
Half-year report 2026 to 2027	November 2026	Finance and Assets
End of year report 2026 to 2027	March 2027	Finance and Assets
Service Delivery Plan 2027 to 2028	March 2027	Finance and Assets

Democratic Services Service Delivery Plan 2026 to 2027

This Service Delivery Plan describes how Democratic Services will achieve continuous improvement (service objective). Each performance measure relates to the Council’s strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027.

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Provide effective, high-quality, legally compliant committee and member support services.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 to 2026	Owner and co-owners
Publish agenda for Regulatory Committees within five clear days of a meeting (statutory) Publish agenda for Council, Policy Committees and Audit Committee within seven clear days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Publish decision lists for Council/Committees within three working days of a meeting	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Publish draft minutes for Council/Committees within 14 working days of a meeting	85%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: To provide legal, efficient, and cost-effective elections for the district's electors and our external partners.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 to 2026	Owner and co-owners
Review customer feedback forms/information from the election and resolve, as far as practicable, issues by the commencement of the next election period	90% of all customer feedback actioned (where possible) by the commencement of the next Election period annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager Electoral Services Team

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Customers at the heart of everything we do, maintain sound finances, improve systems and practices, be an excellent employer

Democratic Services’ Service Strategic Objective: To ensure a seamless democratic transition by providing proactive support to cross-council workstreams and delivering high-quality, cleansed data for the new authority’s electoral and committee systems

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound Financial Management

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 to 2026	Owner and co-owners
To actively facilitate and engage with the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme and be operationally ready to transition into the new authority model without service disruption.	Data Cleansing & System Migration: To identify, cleanse, and consolidate all legacy electoral and committee data by April 2027.	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
	Governance Workstream Integration: To provide constitutional advice and attendance at all assigned LGR workstreams (Elections & Democratic Services) by April 2027.	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Publish and maintain an accurate and legally compliant electoral register each year and maximise registration for target groups within the district.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 to 2026	Owner and co-owners
Achieve at least an 85% registration rate for Route 2 forms	85%, annually	94.13%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Number of electors registering electronically	At least 7,000 to be registered, annually	8,148 registered	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Safe, vibrant and inclusive communities. Community sustainability.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Promote community engagement and involvement in the democratic processes of the Council.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sustainable Communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 to 2026	Owner and co-owners
Publication of agendas on the website on the day of despatch	100%, annually	100%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Be an excellent employer.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Ensure continual professional development of staff and councillors.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 – 2026	Owner and co-owners
Prepare, agree and implement member Induction, training and development programmes and member seminar sessions to provide members with the required knowledge and skills to perform their role as a district councillor effectively	10 Member seminar/training sessions, annually	Baseline 2025/26 (no District Elections) 1 Member Induction 6 Member training sessions 11 Member seminar sessions	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Council’s Strategic Outcome: Be an excellent employer.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: To ensure that the Council’s corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.

Link to Corporate Plan: Sound financial management. Sustainable communities.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 – 2026	Owner and co-owners
Regularly review higher-level corporate risks, including: - changes to the political composition of the Council affecting the democratic decision-making processes - local, regional and national legislative and policy changes affecting the democratic process, both	100%, annually	Reviews of Constitution, Political Proportionality and Committee Structure. Conduct local elections/referenda. Offering services of the team on a commercial basis: - clerking of ECTC & ECSS Boards - clerking of Kennett Garden Village Delivery Board Conduct PDR/CGR.	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 – 2026	Owner and co-owners
in terms of electoral administration/elections and democratic decision-making • impact of corporate initiatives, such as shared services commercialisation, on the working practices of the team			

Council’s Strategic Outcome: A clean, green and attractive place.

Democratic Services’ Strategic Objective: Reduce paper usage via greater use/uptake of electronic solutions.

Link to Corporate Plan: Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 – 2026	Owner and co-owners
Encourage and facilitate a new intake of councillors’ usage of electronic means to access and receive Council information/agendas	25% of councillors to receive agendas via electronic means annually	39.29% all electronic	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
To improve digital engagement and reduce postage costs by increasing the proportion of the electoral register with associated email addresses	Target, annually: 5% (73.82%) To reduce reliance on paper-based correspondence through the proactive collection of elector contact data. "While statutory notices remain paper-based as per the Representation of the People Act, email collection will be used for reminders, canvass 'Route 1' communications, and general enquiries to improve response times."	Objective/Target altered to capture the correct data according to the software data that is collectable *68.82% of electors receive correspondence electronically (except where legislation dictates paper copies MUST be sent).	Democratic Services & Elections Manager

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2025 – 2026	Owner and co-owners
Democratic Services staff to actively seek to reduce paper usage via electronic solutions	Corporate Target, annually: 10% paper reduction per Service Area 2023/24	-28.96%	Democratic Services & Elections Manager