

Looking ahead to 2020/21 and using our resources to support the delivery of our goals  
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using our resources to support the delivery of our goals You are in the Annual  
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efficiently First published: 30 June 2020 Last updated: 17 August 2020 Looking ahead  
to 2020/21 One of our challenges for the year ahead is to ensure local authorities  
can continue delivering well-run elections. We supported the UK Government's decision  
to postpone the polls scheduled for May 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There are  
significant challenges to delivering the combination of polls now scheduled for May  
2021. We are working with the UK's governments and supporting local authorities, to  
ensure they can deliver the polls successfully, safely and in line with relevant  
guidelines. There is already pressure on local authority resources because of  
outdated and complex legislation. There are more than 50 Acts and 170 Statutory  
Instruments relating to the delivery of elections. This leads to real costs,  
consequences and risks for voters, candidates and campaigners, regulators and  
governments. Proposals from the UK's Law Commissions provide a well-researched basis  
for further work. In 2020-21, we will continue calling on the UK's governments and  
parliaments to take these forward. While annual canvass reforms in Great Britain are  
welcome, governments need to do more to modernise the registration system. The  
existence of more than 370 separate registers that do not communicate with each other  
leaves the system vulnerable, while voters being unable to check online whether they  
are already registered leads to duplicate applications before every election. In the  
coming year, we will continue to encourage the UK's governments to commit to making  
registration more automated and connected to address these challenges. The nature of  
political campaigning continues to change, with parties spending a greater portion of  
their advertising budgets on digital advertising. In response to these changes, we  
need the right powers and tools to continue regulating political finance effectively.  
In 2020-21, we will work with all concerned to encourage compliance and we will run a  
new campaign to help voters understand digital campaigning rules. We welcome the  
Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) review of electoral regulation in the  
UK. The nature of political campaigning has significantly changed, as has the  
public's expectations since the UK Parliament wrote the rules 20 years ago. We will  
be ready to provide CSPL and others with information and advice to help deliver  
outcomes and recommendations that best enable people to continue recognising the UK  
as a leading and robust democracy. Whilst acknowledging the likely continuing impact  
of the Covid-19 pandemic, our 2020-21 work programme includes: continuing with our  
transition towards providing our guidance in a new modern, more accessible format  
working with partners on improving the accessibility of elections so that everyone  
has equal access to election information and processes supporting the UK's  
governments' annual canvass reforms supporting the 2021 canvass in Northern Ireland  
developing a strategy to support increased resilience in the delivery of electoral  
services at a local level publishing new performance standards for EROs engaging with  
the Scottish and Welsh governments' policy and legislative agendas for changes to the  
franchise for their elections reviewing our compliance with our Welsh language  
obligations, to a standard the Welsh Language Commissioner is satisfied with  
completing a review of political parties' and campaigners' registered descriptions to  
make sure only those meeting the legal tests are included delivering a new political  
finance online system to support parties and campaigners to deliver their financial

returns efficiently building the capacity to prosecute suspected offences and consulting on the way we approach the use of prosecutions engaging with government policy and legislative agendas for political finance strengthening our engagement with social media companies and other providers of digital advertising, to ensure their services and policies support transparency for election and referendum campaign activity enhancing our public awareness activity to help people understand digital campaigning rules and by producing education materials for young people improving the accessibility of our information by developing our website further including work to share open data developing a new five-year Corporate Plan implementing our new people strategy delivering digitally-enabled business change to reflect the expectations on a modern employer continuing to work with the Scottish and Welsh parliaments to implement our new accountability arrangements reviewing how we deliver legal services that effectively meet our changing requirements reviewing quality management processes across our main services and functions Using our resources to support the delivery of our goals Our people Staff relations and engagement The expertise, hard work and high level of commitment of our workforce enable successful performance and delivery of our Corporate Plan. We value the positive and constructive relationship we have with colleagues and work hard to maintain it. Our staff engagement group meets on a regular basis to seek input from colleagues on emerging issues and help to maintain good relations with staff. We also actively encourage staff involvement as part of the day-to-day process of line management, and we share information on current and prospective developments widely and regularly. To support this, we have a recognition agreement with the Public and Commercial Services Union. We completed our latest staff survey in March 2020 and 86% of employees responded. Our employee engagement score was 72% (up from 65% in 2018-19). Our scores compared most positively to the Civil Service benchmark in areas such as our people agreeing that: we took action after the previous survey they feel a strong personal attachment to our organisation and its work they would recommend the Electoral Commission as a place to work The areas where we compared least positively to the Civil Service benchmark and we need to improve on include people agreeing that: there are opportunities for them to progress in their careers at the Electoral Commission they have the IT systems and equipment they need to do their jobs effectively we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace Equal opportunities and diversity We are committed to the principle of equality of opportunity and the value of diversity. Our single equality scheme sets out our duties and commitments across the whole of the UK and includes an action plan that we update annually. The scheme reflects the public sector equality duty, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We have designed our scheme to ensure: that everyone who is eligible is able to participate in the democratic process, by identifying barriers, making recommendations and working with others to remove them that we embed equality and diversity in all our work, treat all customers fairly and with respect, and are transparent in the decisions we make equality of opportunity for everyone and that all staff are treated fairly and with respect We completed equality impact assessments on relevant policies and procedures throughout 2019-20. The equality impact assessments support a commitment to evidence-based policy making. In addition to arrangements for consultation and monitoring, the assessment process helps to develop effective policies that meet the needs of people in respect to any protected characteristics. Our staff group on equality, diversity and inclusion met regularly

and supported our activities in these areas. Our latest staff survey includes questions about equality, diversity and inclusion. Results showed that an area of concern for our staff is that our organisation does not reflect the diversity of the people we serve, and they do not think we are doing enough to show our commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. We will start to address these concerns as we embed a new people strategy in 2020, which includes work to review and improve our recruitment and selection procedures.

**Occupational health and safety** We review our health and safety policy annually. We also have procedures, guidance and risk assessments in place to cover our core activities. A health and safety group oversees our arrangements. They meet regularly and report to our senior leadership group. However, primary responsibility for health and safety sits with people managers. We initiate independent health and safety audits of our premises each year, which involves inspecting working environments and reviewing safety management systems. These audits tell us if our arrangements are suitable and highlight any improvements we need to make. Findings from audits completed in 2019-20 were generally satisfactory and arrangements were compliant with legislation and best practice.

**Our environmental impact** We recognise that delivering our activities has an impact on the environment and we continue to work towards minimising this impact. The following information summarises our use of energy and water, and the production and disposal of waste material. We lease office space in four cities from a combination of public and private sector property owners. We do not have direct control of utility supplier and waste disposal targets and management at our premises. For a number of our offices, the property owner manages energy and water consumption as well as waste disposal and recovers costs through a consolidated service charge. This report includes consumption and waste disposal data from the London office only, which is our largest property and the base for the majority of our staff. Offices in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast have relocated to smaller, more environmentally efficient premises in the last 10 years. The lease on our London office ends in 2020. After reviewing our accommodation options, we have decided to renew the lease. Other initiatives are in place, in order to help minimise environmental impact. Since 2011-12, we have: reduced printed resources provided to electoral administrators and other groups, focusing on electronic provision wherever possible encouraged the use of video and teleconferencing to avoid unnecessary travel with consequential CO2 emissions operated recycling facilities in all our offices upgraded to more energy efficient information communication technology equipment

**Summary (London office)**

Area	greenhouse gas emissions 2019-20 Actual	1 2019-20 Target	* 2018-19	2017-18 CO 2e in tonnes	Not available	211	187	235
Area: estate energy	2019-20 Actual	1 2019-20 Target	* 2018-19	2017-18 Consumption (kWh)	Not available	661,061	639,526	682,595
Expenditure	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Area: estate waste	2019-20 Actual	1 2019-20 Target	* 2018-19	2017-18 Amount (tonnes)	Not available	9.84	10.00	9.67
Expenditure	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available
Area: estate water	2019-20 Actual	1 2019-20 Target	* 2018-19	2017-18 Consumption	Not available	795 m	3 742 m	3 847 m
Expenditure	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available

\*The annual target shown is calculated as an average of the previous two years.

**Emissions report (London office)**

Greenhouse gas emissions: Non-financial indicators (CO 2e in tonnes)	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Total gross emissions	Not available	187	235	268
Gross emissions - fossil fuel consumption	Not available	151	198	227
Gross emissions - travel	Not available	36	37	41
Related energy consumption (kWh)	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Electricity	Not available	446,018	487,611	495,414
Gas	Not available	193,508	211,990	187,181

**Financial**

indicators (£) 2019-20 2018-19 2017-18 2016-17 Expenditure on energy Not available  
 Not available Not available Not available Expenditure on travel £138,514 £125,450  
 £113,852 £166,585 Performance commentary on emissions Reported fossil fuel  
 consumption has decreased year on year, an ongoing effect of the property owner's  
 introduction of measures to reduce levels of electricity consumption, including lower  
 'out of hours' operation of plant and machinery and the introduction of energy-  
 efficient lighting. Waste report (London office) General waste and recycling figures  
 are based on a proportion of total building waste and are not directly controllable  
 by us. Confidential waste disposal for the organisation is handled separately from  
 that for other building occupants. We shred the confidential waste we generate on-  
 site before it is recycled into low-grade paper Non financial indicators (tonnes)  
 2019-20 2018-19 2017-18 2016-17 Total waste Not available 10.00 10.01 9.67 Non-  
 hazardous waste: Confidential 2.13 5.58 2.81 2.48 Non-hazardous waste: General waste  
 reused or recycled Not available 7.22 7.26 7.19 financial indicators 2019-20 2018-19  
 2017-18 2016-17 Total disposal cost Not available Not available Not available Not  
 available Confidential £1,169 £1,227 £1,134 £994 General waste reused or recycled Not  
 available Not available Not available Not available The figure for the general and  
 recycled waste is based on a proportion of total building waste. All general waste  
 produced in the building, including that generated by us, is sent to a nearby energy  
 from waste plant, instead of landfill sites. Using our financial resources  
 efficiently Using our financial resources efficiently In 2019-20, the resource  
 initially made available to us by the UK Parliament was £19.4m for voted activity. We  
 received non-voted funding of £200k to pay Commissioners' fees. In January 2020,  
 £2.8m was added to our resource to fund expenditure on the 2019 UK Parliamentary  
 general election, and our Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget was increased by  
 £285k to manage the risk of variations in legal provision. This augmented our net  
 cash requirements by £3m. In achieving our objectives, we have used £20.0m worth of  
 resources for the whole year. This was out of the available sum of £22.2m approved by  
 the UK Parliament in our Supplementary Estimate (HC 64) for the net resource  
 requirement. The graphic below summarises our financial performance on the 'voted'  
 element of our budget. Financial performance 2019-20 Our financial performance  
 follows our strategic performance, being dominated by a shifting electoral timetable.  
 For the year 2019-20: our staff costs represent 47% of our expenditure, which is the  
 same as 2018-19 our operating costs rose from 28% to 36% of our allocated budget due  
 to additional public awareness work for the European Parliamentary elections and the  
 UK Parliamentary general election we saw a similar spend for EU referendum operating  
 costs, which represent the costs of litigation defended net of costs received during  
 the year our capital expenditure had a slight increase from 4.3% to 4.5% We report  
 our underspend on the Treasury's usual measure ("R-DEL excluding depreciation") as  
 this reflects in-year operational decisions. In 2019-20 this was £1.5m against the  
 voted budget of £20.3m (7.4%). This was predominantly due to unused contingency and  
 other savings in delivering the unscheduled UK Parliamentary general election. The  
 cancellation, in March 2020 of the May 2020 polls, by the UK Government also caused  
 the deferral of significant costs into 2020-21, increasing the underspend in this  
 year. Excluding these exceptional factors, the underspend was £0.369m (1.8%), meeting  
 our corporate objective. However due to these exceptional factors we have chosen to  
 report that objective as unmet within our performance report. The underspend is  
 comprised of: £599k underspend on the UK Parliamentary general election £589k in  
 reduced campaign spending due to the cancellation of the May 2020 elections £96k in  
 reduced staffing costs £76k of unexpected income from the Senedd and Scottish

Parliament. £103k as a combination of smaller underspends £33k of unclaimed policy development grant Other £235k in depreciation due to reduced capital spend £415k in provisions due to lower than expected legal costs £111k in capital projects The £21k underspend against non-voted funding is due to lower than expected costs for Commissioners. Our income in our accounts relates to charges for registering political parties and work completed for the Senedd and Scottish Parliament. We collect fines raised against political parties and individuals for failure to comply with the rules on party and election finance and then surrender these to the Consolidated Fund as required by law. The penalties due was £232,980 in 2019-20 received by 31 March 2020 and surrendered to the Consolidated Fund. In addition to monitoring performance against budgets, we also managed within our cash limits set by Parliament. We required cash amounting to £20.2m in 2019-20 to finance our voted activities, which was £1.5m less than the sum of £21.7m approved by the UK Parliament in our Supplementary Estimate. The reconciliation of net resources outturn to net cash requirement provides a reconciliation from our outturn to the net cash we required in-year. The Statement of Cash Flows shows that the cash balance as at 31 March 2020 was £197k. The Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2019 shows negative taxpayers' equity of £0.4m due to outstanding invoices accrued for. Supplier payments Although we are independent of government, we aim to comply with the Prompt Payment Code that operates across the public sector. The target is to pay undisputed invoices within 30 days. In 2019-20, we paid 81.6% of invoices (99.9% in 2018-19) within 30 days. The reduction was due to a required change in process for purchase orders, which is now in place meaning we anticipate performance now increasing again. Freedom of Information, complaints and parliamentary questions We are committed to the principles of openness and transparency in public life and acknowledge the duty to provide information to the public. In 2019-20, we received 287 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, a significant increase on the 224 we received in the previous year. We responded to 59.4% of these within the 20 working days statutory timeframe (against a target of 90%) due to an increased number of large and complex requests during the electoral events. The proportion of large, complex and repeated requests has also increased compared to previous years. We responded to 13 FOI internal review requests, 4.5% of the total requests answered. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) notified us of six complaints, one related to a subject access request and five related to FOI requests; this is less than 2% of the total FOI requests answered in 2019-20. We received 20 subject access requests, compared to five in 2018-19. We responded to all of these promptly. We received one complaint and this is pending closure from the ICO. We also received six requests for erasure under the General Data Protection Regulation/Data Protection Act 2018. The holding of the European Parliamentary elections and UK Parliamentary general election contributed to most of the increase in the volume of requests we received in 2019-20. We handled 51 complaints, compared to 37 in 2018-19. We upheld three complaints and partially upheld a further three. These complaints were mainly due to administrative errors and delays in responding to queries. We received 11 requests for review. While none of these reviews changed the original outcome of the complaint, they did enable further explanation and assistance. The Parliamentary Ombudsman is considering one complaint and we are awaiting the outcome of that. In addition, we received correspondence from 709 members of the public complaining about difficulties in being able to vote due to the Brexit-related short lead in notice to the European Parliamentary elections. We responded to 49 parliamentary questions during 2019-20, including questions about digital campaigning, electoral fraud, the accuracy and completeness of the electoral

registers and the effectiveness of electoral law. Bridget Phillipson MP, a member of the Speaker's Committee, was our spokesperson in the UK Parliament and answered questions on our behalf. Supply estimate for 2020-21 Our supply estimate for 2020-21 (HC303) provides for a net resource requirement of £21.9m. The Speaker's Committee approved this on 29 April 2020. There is no reason to believe that future approvals will not be forthcoming. We plan to use these resources to continue delivering our four goals around the delivery of elections, the regulation of political finance, the use of our expertise to improve democratic processes and the best use of our resources.

1. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the data was not available from our landlord at the time of publishing. We will publish this data on our website in due course. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 a b c d Related content

Testing the EU referendum question Find out about our testing of the EU referendum question Report: Voting in 2017 Read our report about voting at the general election in 2017 Report: How the 2017 UK general election was run Read our report about how the 2017 general election was run Results and turnout at the 2017 UK general election View the results and turnout at the 2017 general election