



ELECTORAL MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

MAY 2007 ELECTORAL PILOTS



PROSPECTUS

October 2006

Introduction

1. In this prospectus, the Government invites expressions of interest from English local authorities seeking to run electoral modernisation pilots at the May 2007 local elections. The Government is committed to a programme of modernisation and the local elections in 2007 provide an excellent opportunity to maintain the momentum which was started in 2000. Through the gradual process of independently evaluated piloting we have the opportunity to investigate innovations while preserving the trust and confidence people have in the electoral system.

2. As detailed in the earlier DCA Newsflash, these electoral modernisation pilots will be run according to the provisions of section 10 of the Representation of the People Act (RPA) 2000. One of the primary focuses of the 2007 pilots is to further investigate the suitability of electronic voting (e-voting) channels as an enhancement to our traditional electoral process. However, we also wish to see e-counting and various administrative innovations piloted further to give us a clearer picture as to their effectiveness and promote their development as an aid to more efficient electoral administration.

3. **If you are interested in conducting a pilot and it falls within the broad description given in this prospectus please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss it further and request an application form.** This approach will ensure that each proposal fits in with the areas of innovation that we are seeking to pilot and save considerable time and effort for both parties. Applications other than on official forms will not be considered. Contact details are given at the end of this prospectus.

Strategic fit

4. The electoral modernisation pilot projects are an integral part of the wider Government agenda to modernise democracy and re-engage citizens. This has become a pressing priority in recent years as there has been a trend towards lower levels of voter participation in elections. While the Government recognises the complexities of the causes of that trend, we believe that one response must be to make voting more accessible and straightforward, while maintaining or increasing security and confidence. Accordingly, the Government wishes to see in place systems that support a secure multi-channel approach for elections, with voting possible by electronic means (including Internet, by telephone and through IT in polling stations), by post and at conventional polling stations.

5. Research for the Electoral Commission released in 2003 shows there is significant demand for electronic voting and that it may help stem the declining turnout at elections. Their research revealed that more than half (55%) of English adults said that being offered electronic voting in some form would encourage them to vote at the next local election. The youngest demographic group – the 18-24 year olds - were most keen to try the new methods with three-quarters saying that e-voting would encourage them to participate.
6. The electoral process needs to fit with modern lifestyles, where for example, many people in the course of their working day spend little of any time in the locality of their polling station. As the population in general becomes more comfortable with conducting transactions electronically, enabling voting in this way could promote increased participation in elections.
7. Making electronic channels available may also meet an expectation, particularly amongst younger people, who are the most disengaged group, and work against further decline in participation.
8. The project also fits with the DCA Strategic 5 year plan and its public service agreements in strengthening democracy and rights to renew the relationship between citizens and the State, focusing services on the needs of the public and communities and making interaction with Government more accessible.

Drivers and benefits for the pilots

9. The main external factors driving the electoral modernisation strategy and subsequent pilots are:
 - That voting is unnecessarily inconvenient having regard to today's lifestyles where, for example, many people in the course of the working day will often spend little or no time in the locality of their polling station.
 - The need to improve access for those who find it difficult to attend a polling station in person due to disability.
 - The context of the Government's corresponding drive towards the electronic delivery of services in an era where it is increasingly common for an ever-wider array of transactions to be completed remotely either online or by phone. Indeed there may be an expectation by younger voters who have grown up in the Internet age that voting should also be available this way.
 - The demands and infrastructure needed to manage and support larger scale electoral events resulting from combination and greater complexity arising from use of different voting systems such as STV.
 - The context being set by local government reforms encouraging greater community participation in decision-making between elections.
10. The broad benefits we see from electoral pilots include:
 - the ability to test changes and innovations in a real world environment;
 - the facility for formal evaluation the ability to undertake testing in a controlled environment and
 - the ability to ensure effective project management and delivery.

Pilot innovations sought for May 2007 pilots

11. For this round of pilots we are building on the knowledge and learning from previous pilots, taking account of recent changes in electoral legislation and refining the systems and processes that we wish to test. This will mean that the requirements for the nature of pilots

and the detail of the systems and processes used will be more closely defined by DCA. Whilst we still welcome suggestions for pilots that encompass innovations beyond what we are looking for or which combine innovations in a manner that can provide learning useful to the modernisation programme, we are focusing on the specific areas that we wish to test.

12. The following list contains examples of the types of pilots we envisage conducting in May 2007:

- Remote electronic voting pilots - being internet and telephone voting services. These are discussed more in Annex A.
- Supervised electronic voting pilots – these include the provision of electronic facilities, such as e-voting kiosks or PC based solutions, for use in supervised locations. We are particularly interested in piloting these systems in polling stations or polling places which provide voting capability for a number of contests within a specified area. These are discussed more in Annex A
- Early voting and ‘vote anywhere’. In order to build upon learning from previous pilots in respect of advance / early voting, we would particularly welcome applications for advance voting innovations from local authorities who piloted in the May 2006 local elections. Early voting may be combined with electronic voting. We are not at this stage limiting applications for such innovations to those who have piloted early / advance voting before, but where this has not occurred there will need to be a strong business case and clear learning that fits with the overall aims of the programme.
- E-counting pilots - these include, in particular, e-counting processes not yet trialled in pilots to date and piloting that provides learning on the capability, accuracy and scalability of e-counting which supports the development of standards to underpin legislative rollout. These are discussed more in Annex B
- ‘Administrative’ (i.e. non-electronic) changes to existing processes that enhance access, security or administrative efficiency. We are interested in considering changes that could benefit the further development of elections processes and security that meet with the objectives and themes outlined above. More detail is given on this in Annex C.
- Other electoral innovations, especially those which could improve the efficiency, transparency and security of elections.

13. Lessons from previous pilots suggest that we need to maintain the strategic focus of the pilots programme and ensure there are clear benefits and learning arising from individual pilot schemes. Accordingly, we intend to work closely with local authorities during the development of pilot applications, to ensure they have clear benefits, learning objectives and performance requirements

14. We are looking to effectively test the elements we set out in this prospectus and feel that needs individual pilot projects to focus on certain aspects or relate processes, not seek to encompass all we are setting out in this prospectus.

15. There are, of course, some major elements of what we wish to test that are related (such as e-voting and e-counting) and there is merit some pilots being undertaken that link those. However, we also wish to see pilots that concentrate on, for example, only e-counting of paper ballots.

16. This involvement from will continue through the implementation of pilots. The Electoral Commission will also ensure that it communicates effectively with pilot authorities

throughout the process to ensure that evaluation requirements are clearly understood. This approach will enable more thorough monitoring, testing and evaluation and provide the best possible information on which to make decisions about the future strategy for piloting.

17. To facilitate the development and adoption of robust e-voting services, as Government has done previously, the DCA is co-ordinating the procurement of e-voting and e-counting services. This procurement exercise will establish a framework consisting of a number of companies or consortia capable of delivering solutions to support piloting over the next four years.

Exclusions and points to note

18. It should be noted that any innovation must fit with existing Government policy and we are not looking for pilots that include reversion from or significant negation of changes brought in through the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

19. Particular innovations we are not seeking to pilot in 2007 include:

- other remote electronic channels such as SMS and digital TV. This is because we are concentrating on the development of the processes for the 'core' channels of internet, PC / kiosk and telephone in the first instance.
- all-postal pilots – it is not considered appropriate to pilot this further whilst the EA Act provisions around postal voting are put in place and further consideration is given to the lessons learnt from previous pilots.

For information, you should be aware that given the resource issues required in the implementation and evaluation of pilots the Government is not seeking applications for by-election pilots for the period from 1 March 2007 until 1 August 2007.

The application and evaluation process

20. The application form is available from Fred Davis at DCA. Applications must be completed in full and returned to the DCA by 17 November 2006. These will be evaluated by the Project Board (which includes representatives from the Electoral Commission and the AEA) and the decision to approve pilots rests with the Secretary of State who is obliged by law to consider any application from a local authority under s.10 RPA 2000. Before reaching his final decision, he will seek the views of the Electoral Commission. As part of the Secretary of State's consideration he will need to be satisfied that:

- the pilot fits within the Government's general vision for electoral modernisation; (see reference material listed later in the document)
- there is learning value to be gained from conducting the pilot and there is a clear means of testing the impact of the innovation – including the implications for security and potential fraud;
- the pilot will maintain public confidence in the electoral process and that key risks have been identified and managed;
- any innovation is as secure, if not more secure than, conventional electoral practices:
- any innovation is robust and attracts public confidence:

- there are effective management arrangements in place and sufficient resources and capacity, both in the local authority and DCA, to deliver the pilot;
- there is local support for the pilot;
- the Electoral Commission's evaluation process will be fully supported; and
- the pilot has an effective business case and offers value for money.

21. In considering the overall package of pilot schemes for May 2007, the Secretary of State will also need to take into account diversity in types of local authorities and any relevant socio-economic and demographic conditions.

22. There has been a tendency in past years for some pilot applications to follow a 'kitchen sink' approach with all of the items listed as being of interest to Government being included in some applications. We do not recommend this approach. It increases risk and impacts on the ability to derive clear and effective learning from a pilot.

23. We are always interested in pilots where a number of authorities combine to gain benefits around scale and exposure of a large electorate to innovations. This may also be an important tool in assisting the transfer of learning and knowledge from Authorities with piloting experience onto those who may not have been involved in the programme before.

24. We are also interested in pilots which are geared towards further embedding some innovations and examining their longer term benefits. Accordingly, we welcome applications to conduct pilots for more than one year but on the condition that there may need to be revisions to piloting after the first year to take into account the leaning and evaluation gained. It should also be noted that such pilots will be subject to any legislative constraints that arise as a consequence of any relevant 'national' election being held in 2008.

25. Through ongoing discussion and involvement in the development of a pilot, we are seeking to make the process easier for all parties. In addition to those listed above, important points about managing and delivering a pilot should be considered when making an application as they will improve your chances of success. These include

- demonstrating the feasibility of delivering the pilot within the available time and taking into account the additional challenge of implementing new EA Act provisions;
- demonstrating an understanding of the risks and issues associated with the pilot and how you plan to address them;
- demonstrating and understanding of the contingencies you need to have in place – particularly to protect the security and integrity of the election;
- having a clear and comprehensive communications plan covering all stakeholders
- project planning and management arrangements, including availability of staff after the election to contribute to the evaluation process;
- management of service suppliers.

26. We are more than willing to share our learning and experience from previous pilots with you as you develop your application.

Preparing Statutory Orders

27. Following approval of any application the relevant officers in the local authority will be expected to fully co-operate with the development of the Statutory Order. This Order amends the current legislation and must reflect the exact nature of the innovation for the pilot to be legally compliant. Experience has shown that the preparation of these Orders is time-consuming and requires intensive work from both local authorities and DCA. Failure to prepare an Order in good time (which includes providing sufficient time for the Electoral Commission to carry out their statutory consideration of draft Orders) would mean the pilot scheme could not proceed.

Funding

28. As in previous years, the Government will consider providing funding, in addition to the local authority's existing election funding, for pilots that test an electronic element. This is considered an appropriate approach at this time given the increased costs associated with some elements and the focus we will be placing on extracting data and learning from implementation and testing.

29. Whilst Government may fund electronic elements of 'administrative' pilots such as early voting with the use of electronic registers, it cannot fund other elements of pilots such as accommodation and publicity for early voting. We have monies allocated specifically by the Treasury for the purpose of piloting e-voting and other electronic developments and these cannot be allocated elsewhere.

30. Details of existing funding and estimates of additional funding required must be supplied with any application. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis and will only be approved if it has an effective business case and offers value for money. It is understood that final costs cannot be agreed until suppliers are in place but it is important that details of the funded elements and an estimate of the funding required are supplied with the application.

31. If you are in any doubt about funding of any elements of a pilot you are proposing you should talk this through with the team at DCA.

Outline timetable

32. The following provisional timetable indicates the target dates for key milestones:

October/November	Discussions with prospective authorities
17 November 06	Final deadline for submitting applications
1-7 December 06	Decisions on pilot applications with response to local authorities within the week
January 06	Drafting of Statutory Orders commences in consultation with local authorities, The Commission and suppliers
February/March	Development and testing
26 March 07	All Statutory Orders signed by this date
27 March 07	Notice of election
3 May 07	Polling Day

Evaluation by the Electoral Commission

33. The Electoral Commission has a statutory duty to evaluate every electoral pilot scheme, and report its findings within three months of the election. The Commission will submit individual evaluation reports on each pilot scheme to the Secretary of State and the local authority concerned. The Commission may also carry out an overarching analysis reviewing the 2007 pilot schemes collectively. This would be the basis for making recommendations and sharing lessons for future pilot schemes.

34. The Commission's statutory evaluation and assessment criteria are outlined in section 10 of the RPA 2000. The Commission will also consider a range of additional criteria, and will publish its overall evaluation framework once applications have been approved.

35. In order to enable full and effective evaluation of pilot schemes, local authorities and their suppliers will be required to provide the Commission with assistance during the preparation and delivery of the pilot scheme, including:

- Access to data and information, including current and historic turnout data, project information and background information;
- Access to cost data to allow an assessment of value for money;
- Access to key project personnel; *and*
- Where appropriate, access to polling stations and the count.

36. The Commission recognises this is a significant undertaking for local authorities, and will seek to work alongside local authorities in evaluating pilot schemes. The Commission will provide authorities with an assigned evaluator who will be responsible for establishing effective local relationships and collecting data and information.

37. In addition, organisations acting on behalf of the Commission will make some information requests of pilot authorities. As in previous pilots, it is likely that the Commission will undertake or contract others to undertake:

- an assessment of the accessibility of pilot schemes;
- a review of the operation of any technical components of pilot schemes; *and*
- public opinion research.

Additional information

38. You can find information useful in preparing an application and background to the modernisation process in the following documents and links:

- The Electoral Administration Act - the EA Bill gained Royal Assent on 12 July 2006 - <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060022.htm>
- The Electoral Commission's evaluations of the pilots in May 2006 – <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/pilotsmay2006.cfm>

- The Electoral Commission's evaluations and responses to pilots since 2002, including the e-Voting pilots in 2002 and 2003 and with links to relevant reports on disabled access and public opinion – <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/statutoryreports.cfm>
- The Government's Response to the Electoral Commission's Report: *Securing the Vote*. This is published on the DCA's website at - <http://www.dca.gov.uk/legist/electroadminlegist.pdf>
- DCA website elections links page - <http://www.dca.gov.uk/elections/pubs.htm> - this includes links to Government reports and reports to which they respond produced by other organisations such as the Electoral Commission and OSCE - ODIHR.
- Direct link to the policy discussion paper on Electoral Administration and related documents - <http://www.dca.gov.uk/consult/elections/electoraladmin.htm>
- Electoral Commission website pages for specific reports not linked from the DCA page: *Securing the vote* – <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/templates/search/document.cfm/12944>
- *The marked electoral register* - <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/templates/search/document.cfm/11616>
- *Understanding registration* - <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/templates/search/document.cfm/13545>

Contact details

Please see contact details below to discuss potential pilots or express an interest

39. For all general enquiries please contact:
Fred Davis. e-mail: fred.davis@dca.gsi.gov.uk Tel: 0207 210 8242.
40. For electronic pilots, including e-counting please contact
Andrew Winsor. e-mail: andrew.winsor@dca.gsi.gov.uk Tel: 0207 210 8308.
41. For pilot evaluation enquiries please contact The Electoral Commission:
Tom Hawthorn. e-mail: THawthorn@electoralcommission.org.uk Tel 0207 271 0565

ANNEX A – e-Voting

The Government's position is to investigate e-voting with a view to taking advantage of electronic solutions to enhance and supplement existing voting process and systems. The aim is to provide additional channels, rather than replace existing ones, and to give electors greater choice, access and enhanced information and functionality. The notes below are intended to identify issues that we wish to investigate in order to gain learning about their usefulness or otherwise in developing processes and providing an effective service for electors.

e-Voting in Supervised Environments

E-voting in polling stations can be conducted in a variety of different ways and brings a number of potential benefits, including:

- the system may assist users to avoid mistakes and prevent them inadvertently spoiling their ballot papers; This could be particularly useful where elections are combined and with complex ballots.
- the system may be used to link to the elector to candidate information to ensure they have the opportunity to update themselves on candidates and policies at the time of voting;
- the systems may be configured to provide options for different languages – something that is obviously beneficial in an increasingly multi-cultural society where English may not be the first language for many people entitled to vote in elections;
- the systems may be configured to accommodate special needs for people with disabilities – this may enable many people who have previously been unable to vote in private, in person at a polling station to do so;
- e-voting allows quicker tabulation of votes cast and links with e-counting to produce a result more quickly. This could be of particular benefit in mitigating the increased time that is likely to be spent on processing postal votes as a consequence of signature checking and which may cause counts to be delayed to the day following polling day.
- e-voting may have a positive environmental impact by reducing the need for paper. There are however other factors that need to be considered to identify whether there is an overall benefit in this regard.
- the electronic storage and management of data may improve the contingency arrangements available to electoral staff.

Remote e-Voting

The benefits of remote e-voting reflect those of e-voting in general (as above) in enhancing information provision, ensuring accuracy, access for those with particular needs and administrative efficiency but also add:

- much increased access for all through the ability to vote without having to attend a specific location;
- the ability to use functionality already in place at home or work or elsewhere for those with particular needs – e.g. screenreaders or adapted keyboards or other adapted hardware and software for those with disabilities;
- greater capacity for electors to read and digest information (perhaps available on a more consistent basis than relying on production and delivery of paper leaflets) on candidates and policies at times that suit them before casting their ballot; and
- use of existing hardware for casting of ballots rather than having to provide additional hardware in polling stations.
- The ability to scale up remote voting may make it more adaptable and able to support continued increasing demand for remote voting, compared with the current paper system.

One of the major considerations in looking at remote e-voting is expectation of electors. As mentioned above, it is particularly an issue for younger electors and those who attain voting age. Many of those young electors will have already participated in some form of populist ballot, such as Big Brother or Pop Idol, using their PC or telephone and may expect similar processes to be available for statutory elections. Disengagement and non-participation is particularly high amongst the 18-24 age group and it is important to get them involved at a young age to engender ongoing engagement.

E-voting pre-requisites

Combined polls

- In order to mirror the provisions for paper based voting, systems must be able to provide for the ability in combined polls for the elector to vote once for one election and be able to return to the e-voting site at a later time to vote in the other election(s).
- Where competitions are combined, if an elector is eligible to vote in only one of the elections, then there should be some provision that when the elector accesses the voting page via their identifiers (or other access provisions), only the election page(s) for the election(s) that they are eligible to vote in come up on the screen.

Registration for remote e-voting

- A provision for an elector to choose in advance to e-vote which required them to send a signed form to the local authority to register which included some elector generated identifier, such as a password or number, which would constitute half of the identifiers required to gain access to the voting system and validate their vote. At a later date, the elector would be sent the other part of the identification from the authority, which could, for example, be a randomly generated number. This would be a way to mirror the enhanced security added to postal voting in the EA Act through the use of signatures and dates of birth in that the password from the elector is a self-generated identifier whilst the number from the administrator is an externally generated identifier. If either were obtained, they would be useless on their own

Accessibility / Diversity

- Government is clear that all systems will have to meet relevant requirements on accessibility for the services they provide. E-Voting allows for advances in such access and so expectations could be high. This would be both for functionality within the e-

system and its ability to fit with the types of software and hardware being utilised by electors with specific needs.

E-voting options to pilot include:

We think that there is some learning to be derived from comparing and contrasting the various options in different pilots.

- The correct completion of ballot papers is always an issue and something we can explore in more detail with e-voting. Intentionally enabling the elector to undervote, spoil by over voting or leave the ballot paper blank (similar to what they can do with traditional ballots). Alternatively, the technology can guide the voter, with a warning given when under voting, over voting or sending a blank ballot paper through could also be piloted. The voter would then be able to verify that they want to undervote, overvote or leave the ballot paper blank and then cast their vote. A final option to pilot could be using the technology to actively prevent people from making errors by stopping progress until an accurate vote was entered. Where appropriate, we would like to see these e-voting options piloted.
- Information on voting and instructions to voters are a significant issue. The research undertaken by the GLA shows that voters have an expectation of what they have to do when voting - simplistically this is to put a cross in a box. Obviously that is not correct for many competitions but voters often fail to read instructions on ballot papers and in accompanying leaflets and/ or do not follow them correctly. E-voting pilots have the potential to further investigate the effect on participation of requiring people to read information or electors' propensity for accessing information when made readily available via links. Accordingly, we are interested in piloting options which allows voters to have the option to or, maybe more appropriately in this case, be required to listen to or read it before progressing on to completion of their ballots.

Combined with guidance on inaccurately completed papers, this could significantly reduce inadvertently spoiled papers and increase effective turnout.

- E-Voting provides opportunities to take advantage of greater access and support for people for whom English wasn't their first language and systems could provide processes in other languages - to be identified by Returning Officers. Legislation requires that ballot papers have to remain in English or English /Welsh but other information including voting instructions and information on the election and candidates could also be in other languages. It is noted that, to limit costs, we would expect some elements such as translations could be provided by the RO rather than incurring costs from system suppliers for this work.
- Registration and security mechanisms – there are concerns that just posting out identifiers to electors is not fully secure, as noted above pre-registration would seem to provide a proportionate response that met with requirements in the EA Act for additional security for postal voting. We are interested in piloting this but also welcome other suggestions as to how security can be maintained.
- Secrecy and confirmation of votes cast – we are aware of a significant amount of research being undertaken and of experience in other jurisdictions for means of maintaining secrecy of votes cast and ensuring accuracy of votes counted. We are interested in piloting systems that add to the learning available.

Annex B – e-Counting

We regard e-Counting as a potentially valuable solution to increased demands on electoral administration and the issues raised by increasingly large scale (through combination) and more complex (as a result of differing voting systems being introduced) electoral events.

Electronic counting had been used at a number of elections since 2000 with positive outcomes. It has been used in individual local authority elections through pilots and on a large scale in the GLA elections in 2000 and 2004 with it being provided for in the specific legislation for GLA elections. In the latter, e-counting has supported the counting of almost 6 million ballot papers in combined elections using different electoral systems.

E-counting will be used in the combined Scottish Parliamentary and local elections in May 2007 where it will be tested in a significant STV election. Whilst not a pilot, this will enable some further learning on use in more complex elections and the effectiveness of optical character recognition.

It is envisaged that we need to undertake further pilots of e-counting and establishment of standards and an accreditation process before it can be rolled out. Taking the lead from the lessons provided by public perceptions following the abuse of postal voting in 2004 and the attendant negative media, Government is keen to ensure that similar pitfalls do not undermine the benefits to be derived from e-counting.

The benefits of e-counting are:

- It may be more accurate than traditional counts
- It is less resource intensive
- It provided the opportunity to deliver faster results
- It effectively and efficiently counts multiple contests
- It effectively counts complicated contests e.g. STV
- It has the potential to offer cost savings

The learning we anticipate to get from e-counting pilots include:

- Development and agreement of re-count procedures
- Development of effective work-flow processes.
- Better understanding of the accuracy and limitations of e-counting machines.
- Better understanding of the processes needed to improve transparency and trust in e-counting
- Form a basis for standards and accreditation.
- Investigate the feasibility for using commercially available hardware for e-counting.
- Further investigating of the costs associated with e-voting
- The feasibility of councils working together in combined e-counts

Aims of further piloting

1. We want to undertake some further piloting to confirm accuracy, to test different forms of e-counting and to provide information that can form a basis for standards and accreditation.
2. The majority of piloting to date and the currently planned use for 2008 is based on use of proprietary systems and hardware which is expensive and which may be uneconomic for small elections or infrequent use. Systems based on hardware such as scanners and PCs that can be utilised elsewhere outside of election time are of interest in making the process accessible to all local authorities.
3. Cost is a significant issue for use of e-counting. Some models for ownership of dedicated hardware could include sharing between local authorities or hiring out of the machines when not in use by the local authority or counts being undertaken on a joint basis to gain economies of scale.
4. Given increasing pressures of security checking leading to possible delays in counts it may be that e-counting provides an opportunity to reduce human resource requirements or reduce the workload for those available and speed up the delivery of results.
5. Rollout will also require effective mechanisms to be out in place for politicians and media during the course of electronic counting. At present issues have been raised about displays and the information provided during the course of an e-count. Where much of the activity undertaken by politicians, party workers and agents at a count is undertaken in looking at papers and assessing overall outcomes, this is somewhat impacted by the nature of e-counting. Providing something such as electronic screens with ongoing information on the count that replaces the current sight of paper ballots being processed might be an answer. (It should be noted that adjudications should still be undertaken in sight of and with input from candidates etc, albeit they may be on a screen rather than on paper).
6. E-counting is regarded as more accurate than using people (often late at night), is flexible in dealing with both paper and electronic ballots, is able to deal with counting multiple contests at the same time, reduces the time taken and the resources required. It is the element of electronic modernisation that may be most readily achieved.
7. Development of policy – for example, recounts – work towards a range of e-counting solutions based on standards and accreditation that can be implemented and utilised across the UK
8. Costs – info for considered evaluation of benefits / savings.

Annex C – ‘Administrative’ pilots

Given the limited data available, we continue to support further trials of early/advance voting, whether at fixed locations or in the form of mobile facilities. In order to establish evidence about the longer-term impact of innovations, applications from authorities that have undertaken pilot schemes in previous years would be particularly welcome.

Early / advance voting

- Early voting pilots will examine the impact of improving the opportunity for electors to vote by extending their opportunity to visit a polling place. The polling place may be either a traditional polling station which is open at different hours or it may be at an alternative location where electors are likely to be present.
- It is anticipated that making voting more convenient and more aligned with electors daily lives may have a positive impact on turnout. Any pilot will examine this impact on turnout as well as the administrative changes and challenges.

Mobile polling stations/ballot boxes

- This type of pilot involves taking polling stations to places where electors may have difficulty accessing a traditional polling station (e.g. hospitals, care homes) in order to improve access to voting for disadvantaged groups. This may be combined with early voting and will examine the similar issues surrounding acceptance and turnout.

We are also keen to hear from authorities interested in piloting other administrative innovations that could include:

Modernising the process of voting for overseas voters including service personnel

- We welcome expressions of interest to investigate the options to facilitate the process of voting from these remote locations. This will allow us to engage parts of the electorate which are traditionally disadvantaged due to their reliance on postal or proxy voting. There may be an opportunity to use electronic systems which include the electronic use of ballot papers and the use of secure communication channels for result transfer.

Information Pilots

- Under the RPA piloting provisions, local authorities may also pilot the sending by candidates of election communications free of any charge for postage. The Electoral Commission has been keen to see pilots providing more information to electors. Such a pilot may involve the local authority paying the postal charges incurred in respect of sending of candidates election communications.

Innovations that improve the administration and security of the electoral process

- We are also interested in hearing from local authorities on any other innovations that they believe can enhance the administration and security of the electoral process although we will not approve anything that negates, or reverses, provisions in the Electoral Administration Act. Similarly, we are not seeking any changes to the postal vote process unless they can be shown to enhance security.