

Board/Committee:	POLICY & ORGANISATION BOARD
Date of Meeting:	TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2021
Title:	MAY 2021 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS – POST ELECTION STATISTICS
Author:	RETURNING OFFICER & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER
Status:	FOR NOTING AND INFORMATION

Purpose

To advise the Board of the steps that were taken to deliver the 'triple' elections held on Thursday, 06 May 2021 and to provide an update on upcoming legislative changes within Electoral Registration and elections.

Recommendations

1. To note the steps and statistics contained with this report with regard to the delivery of the May 2021 combined elections within Gosport;
2. To note that some of the timetabling and scheduling that was required to deliver these elections in a Covid-19 secure environment are likely to be implemented at the 2022 Polls;
3. To note the proposed and upcoming changes to legislation impacting on the delivery of elections/Polls and the delivery of Electoral Registration services within the Borough.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Local Government elections for all Electoral Wards within the Borough of Gosport, all Electoral Divisions within the Hampshire County Council area, and the Police & Crime Commissioner election for the Hampshire Police Area were held on Thursday, 06 May 2021.
- 1.2 The May 2021 'triple' combined elections were all held during the Covid-19 pandemic with public health protection measures in place for all electoral events throughout the timetable of proceedings.

2.0 Report

2.1 Registration of Electors

As Elected Members are aware, the publication of the annual Electoral Register on 01 December 2021 followed the first year of the Canvass Reform process. The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) had concerns regarding the accuracy of the published register due to no door knocking/canvass being undertaken as public health restrictions were in place, and that the Canvass Reform process was not identifying properties with attainers or electors resident within NAHO accommodation in the Borough.

2.2 All Elected Members were notified in the Members Information Bulletin circulated in early December 2020 that Household Notification Letters (HNL) would be produced and hand delivered to every residential property within the Borough from Thursday 28 January until Monday 08 February 2021.

2.3 The HNL packs contained the following:

1. a notification letter listing all of the registered electors in the property;
2. an A4 information leaflet about the 2021 elections, including statutory deadlines and the options for electors on the three voting methods available to them (polling station, postal and proxy);
3. a postal vote application form;
4. a FREEPOST envelope to return either the HNL with any amendments, or to return a completed postal vote application form.

2.4 The following table shows the starting point from the December 2020 Electoral Register, with the monthly figures following the response to the HNL and the communications undertaken to inform electors of the options to cast their votes in the May 2021 elections.

	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	March 2021	April 2021
Registered Electors	62,854	62,591	62,445	62,513	62,648
Attainer Electors	332	337	351	376	428
Postal Voters	8,852	8,970	10,123	10,275	10,726

Table 1: number of registered electors, attainers and postal voters month on month in the run up to the May 2021 elections.

2.5 During the same time period as outlined in Table 1, the following table shows the number of registrations received month on month, and also the number of duplicate applications received, which still require staff processing time:

	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	March 2021	April 2021
Online applications	673	757	1277	1229	690
Paper applications	123	159	167	328	109
Green flag from DWP	744	810	1342	1332	740
Green flag from local data matching	14	25	56	164	25
Red flag requiring evidence submission	10	19	16	13	10
Red flag requiring attestation	0	0	0	0	0
Unverifiable*	18	26	11	20	7
Rejected**	18	28	11	22	14
Duplicate application***	314	320	479	498	249

*Unverified – the application was not verified as was submitted incomplete/missing information

**Rejected – the application was rejected as the individual was not allowed to register due to nationality, non-residential property etc

***Duplicate – the application was received from an existing elector

Table 2: showing the volume of registrations received and the resulting outcome of those applications

2.6 Polling Places and Polling Stations

Members of the Board are aware that the Returning Officer received a joint letter from Nick Gibb (Minister of State for School Standards) and Lord True (Minister of State for the Cabinet Office) on 11 February 2021 asking Returning Officers to avoid using schools as Polling Stations for the May 2021 elections and encouraging work to find viable alternatives to schools in the local area such as places of worship, gymnasiums or other community or commercial venues.

- 2.7 This letter and request arrived three weeks before all data had to be submitted for the print and production of the Poll Cards for the 60,480 electors who were registered and eligible to vote in the upcoming elections.
- 2.8 Whilst every endeavour was made to find alternative locations to be used as Polling Places, it was necessary to use five schools (Gomer Infant School, Grange County Junior School, Haselworth Primary School, Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School and St Mary's RC Primary School) as there were no appropriate and accessible venues in close proximity within those Polling Districts.

Reference	District(s)	Polling Place	2016 Percentage turnout	2017 Percentage turnout	2018 Percentage turnout	2021 Polling Place (highlighted if different to usual location)	2021 Percentage turnout	Comparison to previous years
1	GA1	Gomer Infant School	23%	22%	24%	Gomer Infant School	22	Very similar
2	GA2	Alverstoke CE (Aided) Junior School	26%	29%	29%	Alverstoke Parish Centre	31	Slightly better
3	GA3	Alverstoke Infants School	31%	31%	32%	Alverstoke Parish Centre	31	Very similar
4	GB1	Alverstoke Infants School	29%		32%	Alverstoke Parish Centre	30	Very similar
5	GB2	Gosport District Scout Activity Centre	29%	29%	31%	Gosport District Scout Activity Centre	31	
6	GB3	St Francis Church Hall	34%	37%	37%	St Francis Church Hall	35	
7	GC1	Bridgemary Methodist Church	24%	26%	21%	Bridgemary Methodist Church	29	
8	GC2	Woodcot Primary School	26%	26%	23%	Fareham & Gosport Family Centre	25	Slightly better
9	GC3	Woodcot Primary School	25%		23%	Fareham & Gosport Family Centre	27	Better
10	GD1	St Matthew's Church	20%	16%	17%	Bridgemary, Rowner & Woodcot Community Association	43	Better
11	GD2	Bedenham Primary School	26%	29%	24%	Gosport RNA Club	19	Worse
12	GD3	Rowner Junior School	21%	22%	20%	6th Gosport Scout Group	20	Same
13	GE1	Solent Evangelical Church	20%	20%	18%	Solent Evangelical Church	19	
14	GE2	Solent Evangelical Church	19%	17%		Solent Evangelical Church	17	
15	GE3	St Mary's RC School	27%	25%	24%	St Mary's RC Primary School	22	
16	GF1	Newtown CE (Controlled) Primary School	17%	14%	16%	Gosport Sea Cadets Unit, Royal Clarence Yard	19	Slightly better
17	GF2	Gosport Methodist Church	33%	30%	32%	Gosport Methodist Church	30	
18	GF3	Nicholson Hall	33%	29%	31%	The Queens Social Club,	30	
19	GG1	Elson Junior School	25%	26%	24%	Gosport & District Sports Association for the Disabled (GADSAD)	21	Worse
20	GG2	Elson Junior School	25%	24%	23%	Gosport & District Sports Association for the Disabled (GADSAD)	22	Worse
21	GH1	Brockhurst Junior School	30%	22%	19%	Freedom Church, (Former Brockhurst Baptist Church)	24	Better
22	GH2	Brockhurst Junior School	20%			Freedom Church, (Former Brockhurst Baptist Church)	15	Same
23	GH3	St John's C of E Primary School	23%	24%	24%	Hardway, Elson & Districts Community Association	20	Worse
24	GI1	Siskin Junior School	15%	13%	15%	Youth, Arts and Media Centre, Nimrod Community Centre	15	
25	GI2	Siskin Junior School	14%	13%	14%	Youth, Arts and Media Centre, Nimrod Community Centre	12	
26	GJ1, GJ2	St John's C of E Primary School	21%	25%	23%	Hardway, Elson & Districts Community Association	22	Very similar
27	GJ3	Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower	22%	25%	26%	Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower	27	
28	GK1	Lee Community Centre	29%	29%	31%	Lee Community Centre	32	
29	GK2	Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School (Youth Centre)	23%	24%	22%	Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School (Youth Centre)	21	
30	GK3	Lee Community Centre	21%	24%	22%	Lee Community Centre	25	
31	GL1	St Faith's Church	30%	30%	29%	St Faith's Church	28	
32	GL2	Lee Methodist Church	35%	34%	35%	Lee Methodist Church	35	
33	GL3	Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School (Youth Centre)	30%	31%	30%	Lee-on-the-Solent Junior School (Youth Centre)	30	
34	GM1	Salvation Army Hall	17%	20%	19%	Salvation Army Hall	19	
35	GM2	Leesland C of E Infant School	25%	25%	29%	St Mary's RC Primary School*	20	Worse
36	GM3	Leesland C of E Infant School	24%			Thorngate Halls*	27	Very similar
37	GN1, GN3	Peel Common Infant School	27%	31%	26%	The Carisbrooke Arms	28	Very similar
38	GN2	St Matthew's Church	26%	27%	21%	Bridgemary, Rowner & Woodcot Community Association	25	Very similar
39	GO1	Thorngate Halls	19%	19%	20%	Thorngate Halls	19	
40	GO2	Gomer Infant School	31%	33%	29%	Gomer Infant School,	31	

Reference	District(s)	Polling Place	2016 Percentage turnout	2017 Percentage turnout	2018 Percentage turnout	2021 Polling Place (highlighted if different to usual location)	2021 Percentage turnout	Comparison to previous years
41	GP1	Rowner Junior School	21%	18%	19%	Gosport Leisure Centre	17	Similar
42	GP2	Grange County Junior School	17%	19%	19%	Grange County Junior School	18	
43	GQ1	St Mary`s R.C Church Hall	25%	19%	24%	St Mary`s R.C Church Hall	22	
44	GQ2	Club Hampshire Centre, (Former Red Cross Centre)	21%	21%	23%	Club Hampshire Centre, (Former Red Cross Centre)	21	
45	GQ3	Haselworth Primary School	29%	26%	30%	Haselworth Primary School	29	
		Cost for venue hire	£6,317.43	£6,435.60	£8,559.75**		£9,506.01***	

* Polling Places changed following the statutory 2019 review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

**2018 – Temporary Polling Station hired due to problem using Leesland Junior School – additional cost £1,176.00)

*** Additional Section 31 Grant money received in 2021 to assist with Covid-19 restrictions and election delivery.

Table 3: showing each Polling Place and the Electoral District(s) allocated to it with the percentage turnout from the previous three local government elections held to compare to the 2021 turnout level

- 2.9 Following the analysis of 2016-2021 turnouts (Table 3) for the Borough of Gosport elections scheduled to be held on Thursday 05 May 2022, it is planned to use all of the alternative Polling Places except the following:

Polling Place	Reason for not using in future elections
Gosport RNA Club	The usual Polling Place does not require electors to cross a major road to visit the Polling Station to cast their vote in the ballot box and will thereby result in turnout increasing compared to 2021
Gosport & District Sports Association for the Disabled (GADSAD)	Usual provision of facilities for the Polling Station staff (toilets and kitchen) and a return to previous turnout levels

- 2.10 Although there is currently the Electoral Review being undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, the Electoral Registration Officer & Returning Officer believes that the locations for Polling Places will be appropriate for future elections (whether held with Public Health Restrictions due to Covid-19 or without any restriction in place), even if the allocated electors and Polling Districts change following the implementation of the review.
- 2.11 A further report will be brought to P&O Board and then for approval by Full Council in late Autumn to confirm the Polling Places once the initial consultation period has closed on the Electoral Review.
- 2.12 Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers visit each Polling Place on Polling Day, and this continued at the May 2021 combined elections, with all Polling Places being visited at least twice during polling hours.
- 2.13 It was however necessary for two Presiding Officers to place '999' calls to Hampshire Constabulary for immediate assistance at their locations at these elections.
- 2.14 The Presiding Officer at Polling Station 17 required police assistance, as an elector who was not registered and therefore no able to vote in the elections, would not leave the Polling Station without being issued with ballot papers, and become verbally and physically aggressive and threatening to Polling Station staff.
- 2.15 Hampshire Constabulary Officers attended, and the elector was removed from the Polling Station. No further action taken by Hampshire Constabulary on the matter.

- 2.16 The Presiding Officer at Polling Station 25 required police attendance, as a local resident on the balcony of a property nearby to the location was behaving in an inappropriate manner, to the electors arriving and leaving the Polling Station.
- 2.17 Hampshire Constabulary Officers attended, and the individual was visited within the property. No further action taken by Hampshire Constabulary on the matter.
- 2.18 **Absent Voting**
Postal Voters
As outline in paragraph 2.4, Elected Members will be well aware of the 20% increase seen in Gosport of electors who chose to cast their vote as a postal voter for the May 2021 combined elections.
- 2.19 Analysis undertaken by the Electoral Registration Officer shows that all Electoral Wards saw increases in the number of postal voters at these combined elections, however no concerns were raised by the Electoral Services staff when receiving and processing the applications for any suspicious incidents or activity indicating electoral fraud within the Borough.

2.20 Table 4, below, shows the number of postal voters per Electoral Ward, with the number of postal votes returned, the number rejected for failing the PI checks and the percentage return:

	Number of postal voters issued	Number of postal packs returned	Number of rejections (failed PI checks)	Percentage return
Alverstoke	856	615	6	70%
Anglesey	650	436	16	65%
Bridgemary North	505	365	3	71%
Bridgemary South	526	334	11	61%
Brockhurst	601	371	4	61%
Christchurch	610	361	4	59%
Elson	582	390	11	65%
Forton	461	274	5	58%
Grange	541	280	8	50%
Hardway	728	475	8	64%
Lee East	799	576	11	70%
Lee West	985	710	6	70%
Leesland	491	347	10	68%
Peel Common	614	440	6	71%
Privett	629	427	9	66%
Rowner and Holbrook	474	304	6	62%
Town	665	420	11	62%
Totals	10,717	7,125	135	

Table 4: showing each the number of postal packs issued per Electoral Ward, with the total number returned, and the number rejected due to failing the PI checks

2.21 The postal vote rejections due to failing the Personal Identifier (PI) checks are summarised below:

Rejection reason:	Total number
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a missing signature	7
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a missing date of birth	2
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a missing signature AND date of birth	25
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched signature	15
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched date of birth	51
Total number of postal voting statements rejected due to a mismatched signature AND date of birth	35
Rejected- Postal voting statement unreturned	44

Table 5: showing the total number of postal vote rejected for each of the statutory criteria required for checking, and also the number of packs returned without a postal vote statement.

2.22 The Returning Officer has also completed and submitted the statutory return to the Electoral Commission for the election. One of the required statistics is the number of Postal ballot packs papers which were returned within the 24 hour period after the close of poll by any method. For completeness, the number of Borough Council postal vote packs returned up to Monday 17 May 2021 is as set out below:

	On 07 May	On 10 May	On 11 May	On 12 May	On 13 May	On 14 May	On 17 May	Grand total
Alverstoke	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	6
Anglesey	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	12
Bridgemary North	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
Bridgemary South	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Brockhurst	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5
Christchurch	5	6	0	2	0	0	0	13
Elson	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	6
Forton	4	2	0	1	0	0	0	7
Grange	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	5
Hardway	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	8
Lee East	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Lee West	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	7
Leesland	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	7
Peel Common	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
Privett	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
Rowner & Holbrook	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
Town	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	5
	47	55	0	6	0	0	0	108

2.23 These returns per Electoral Ward following Polling Day are very similar to the numbers seen following the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Local Government elections and have not raised concern or issues with either the Returning Officer or the Electoral Commission.

2.24 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the public health restrictions in place at the time of the election, it was necessary to timetable the opening of the Envelope As (containing the ballot papers completed by the elector) for each of the Electoral Wards. Following positive comments from candidates and election agents it is proposed to continue this practice for the 2022 Borough of Gosport elections.

2.25 **Proxy Voters**

There were 73 electors that appointed a proxy for these combined

elections. 40 of these electors had their vote cast by their nominated proxy in the polling station and 3 cast their votes themselves without the need of their nominated proxy.

2.26 Emergency Proxies and Coronavirus Emergency Proxies

At these elections the Returning Officer received and allowed one emergency proxy due to medical reasons, and one Coronavirus Emergency Proxy was received and processed (elector required to self-isolate).

2.27 Digital Poll Clerk IT solution

Elected Members are aware that the Returning Officer implemented the Modern Democracy Digital Poll Clerk solution in all Gosport Polling Stations at these elections.

2.28 These tablets contained the Polling Station Register, Corresponding Number Lists (CNLs) and the Ballot Paper Accounts (BPAs) in a secure format and resulted in only one member of the Polling Station staff required to 'serve' electors with their ballot papers as all of the documents were linked using the QR code printed on the back of the every ballot paper.

2.29 The deployment of the Digital Poll Clerk solution helped provide suitable mitigation to the infection risks within the Polling station environment (by not needing the paper Polling Station register, three separate CNLs, and three separate BPAs), and also enabled better staff deployment to manage queueing electors, ensuring social distancing restrictions were being adhered to, cleansing and sanitising the numerous touchpoints within the Polling Place, encouraging electors to use the provided sanitiser on the way in and way out of the station, and general customer service to electors and companions.

2.30 All of the comments from the Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks were extremely positive about the Digital Poll Clerk solution, and candidates and election agents also mentioned that it was a positive benefit in the Polling Stations.

2.31 The Returning Officer is therefore positively inclined to the continued use of this solution for future elections held within Gosport.

2.32 Verification and Count

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the public health restrictions in place at the time of the election, it was necessary to timetable the verification and counting of the votes for each of the Electoral Wards. Following positive comments from candidates and election agents it is proposed to continue this practice for the 2022 Borough of Gosport elections.

- 2.33 If this proposal is put into place, it would result in the verification of all ballot boxes taking place immediately following the close of the polls on the Thursday night (from 10:00pm), and the counting of the votes taking place all day Friday at Gosport Leisure Centre. Due to the Electoral Review, the 2022 elections will be 'all out elections' with electors able to cast TWO votes for candidates, therefore the same process of block, single and split votes (as in the Leesland and Town Division for the HCC elections) will be followed for all Electoral Wards contested in the May 2022 Borough elections.
- 2.34 **Staffing**
The Returning Officer is able to report, that following these elections, all of the mitigations put in place to ensure a Covid-19 safe and secure environment for staff, candidates, agents and voters, no staff appointed reported a positive Covid-19 test result following their employment on any of the election processes (postal vote issue and opening, polling station duties, verification and counts).
- 2.35 The previous report to this Board in November 2020 included a table showing the number of jobs and the number of staff appointed and employed at the elections in Gosport since 2018, and that report estimated 754 jobs for the 2021 elections.
- 2.36 Due to the public health restrictions and the Covid-19 mitigations implemented to ensure a safe and secure environment, the total number of jobs appointed at the May 2021 combined elections was 1,011 and these were undertaken by a total of 252 individuals.

3.0 Changes to legislation and horizon scanning

3.1 Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of the Borough of Gosport

Elected Members are aware of the above currently taking place, with the final recommendations published on 02 November 2021, the Order laid before Parliament (for a period of 40 days) in February 2022, and the May 2022 elections to be held on the new Electoral Wards.

3.2 Boundary Commission for England Parliamentary Constituencies Review

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is the independent body which reviews Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England, has now published its initial proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries.

- 3.3 The BCE uses the statutory formula which it applies to the electorate figures to distribute the 650 Parliamentary constituencies

across the four parts of the UK.

- 3.4 The Commission has also applied the same distribution formula to the allocation in England, which resulted in a redistribution of constituencies among a number of the English regions, with the South East receiving an increase of seven constituencies to make a total of 91 for the area (including the two protected constituencies on the Isle of Wight).
- 3.5 The statutory eight week consultation on the initial proposals closes on 02 August 2021, and the current initial proposals do not make any changes to the Gosport Constituency boundary.
- 3.6 The Commission welcomes feedback from everyone with an interest, and the best place to see the interactive maps of the proposals and to send any views on the proposals is via the BCE consultation website (<https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/>).
- 3.7 **Electoral Integrity Bill**
Elected Members will remember that Gosport took part in The Government's Pilot Scheme for the Voter ID in 2018, and that the Head of Electoral Services was seconded in to the Cabinet Office to assist in the delivery of pilot schemes in the Local Government Elections.
- 3.8 The Queen's Speech on 11 May 2021 included a raft of measures to "strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution" with the introduction of the Electoral Integrity Bill.

During the debate in the Houses of Parliament following the Queen's Speech, the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution provided an outline of the measures that will be included in the Bill, and these can be summarised in four headings:

1. Postal voting;
2. Proxy voting;
3. Undue influence; and
4. Voter identification.

3.9 Postal Voting proposals

Three proposals are contained in the Bill for implementation with regard to postal voting:

1. Reasonable limits on the number of postal vote packs an individual can hand in on behalf of others
2. Removal of 'permanent' postal votes and replacement with the requirement of those registered for a postal vote to reaffirm their identities by reapplying for a postal vote every three years;
3. Ban on the handling of postal vote packs by party campaigners along with further measures against postal vote harvesting and the creation of an offence for or

attempting to find out or to reveal who a postal voter has voted for.

3.10 Proxy voting proposals

The Bill will set a reasonable limit on the number of voters a proxy can act on behalf of.

3.11 Undue influence proposal

Minister for the Constitution and Devolution has stated that there will be legislation to clarify and improve the offence of undue influence of an elector. Although there is already an offence in legislation on this issue, it requires modernising and updating to ensure that there is adequate protection for electors and that the offence is effective for enforcement agencies.

3.12 Voter Identification

Minister for the Constitution and Devolution stated that voters will be required to prove their identity before being issued with ballot paper(s) in Polling Stations.

3.13 The documents that will be accepted as proof of identity will be the following photographic identity documents/passes/cards:

- Concessionary travel passes;
- MoD identity card;
- the photocard permit issued under the Blue Badge Scheme;
- Drivers Licence;
- Passport;
- Free Voter Card – provided free of charge where the elector does not have one of the above forms of photo identification.

3.14 Expired photographic identification will be accepted as long as the photograph is of a good enough likeness to enable Polling Station staff to confirm the identity of the voter.

3.15 **Votes for Life Bill**

The Queens Speech for the opening of the 2021 Parliamentary session contained the 'Votes for Life' bill, and like the Electoral Integrity Bill, formed part of the manifesto pledges in 2017 and 2019 of the Conservative Party.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/votes-for-life-for-british-citizens-living-abroad>

3.16 Current legislation (Section 1 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1985) states:

Subject to a set of conditions, a British citizen living abroad is entitled to be registered as an overseas elector if they are either:

1. a person who is (or was) included in a register of Parliamentary electors before they left the UK, or
2. a person who was too young to be included on the register at the time they left the UK.

- 3.17 The conditions that apply to a person who is (or was) included in a register of Parliamentary electors before they left the UK are (Section 1(3) RPA 1985):
1. that entry on the register was made on the basis that they were resident, or treated for the purposes of registration as resident, at that address; and
 2. that the entry on the register was in force within 15 years of the date given on the declaration provided as part of the application to register as an overseas elector; and
 3. they have not appeared in any other electoral register for any other qualifying address since being last registered at the application address.
- 3.18 The conditions that apply to a person who was too young to be included on the register at the time they left the UK (Section 1(4) RPA 1985):
1. have last lived in the UK within 15 years of the date given on the declaration provided as part of their application to register as an overseas elector; and
 2. have been too young to have been included in a register of electors prior to residing overseas; and
 3. have the name of a parent or guardian included in a register of electors for the address at which they were residing prior to living overseas.
- 3.19 The Electoral Register for the Borough of Gosport published on 01 June 2021 contained 139 entries for individuals registered as Overseas Electors (shown on the electoral register as 'F' markers).
- 3.20 When the Annual/Revised Electoral Register was published on 01 December 2020, that register contained 280 Overseas Electors. The reduction seen now is due to both removal under the '15 year rule' and the non-return of the annual declaration required to ensure continued inclusion and registration.
- 3.21 The significant reduction in Overseas Electors is usually seen the year following a UK Parliamentary General Election being held as electors do not renew their annual declarations. Once an election is called that allows them to participate (parliamentary and national referenda), we receive a large increase in online registrations from this special category of electors.
- 3.22 The 'Votes for Life' Bill will mean that British Citizens who have moved abroad will be given 'votes for life' as the Government will remove the 15-year limit on overseas electors voting rights.
- 3.23 Once implemented, overseas electors will be required to renew their registration details once every three years rather than the current requirement of annually.

3.24 These electors will also be able to reapply for a postal vote or refresh their proxy vote at the same time as renewing their voter registration, thereby ensuring that overseas elects have appropriate voting arrangements in place ahead of any election called.

3.25 Fixed Term Parliaments Act

The draft Fixed-term Parliaments Act (Repeal) Bill was presented to the Housing of Commons and the House of Lords on 01 December 2020.

3.26 The draft Bill will repeal the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2021 along with re-introducing prerogative powers and ensuring Parliament will automatically dissolve five years after it has first met.

3.27 The draft Bill and the draft set of principles that underpin the legal framework for dissolving Parliament are currently undergoing parliamentary scrutiny by a Joint Committee of cross-party MPs and Members of the House of Lords before commencing on Royal Assent.

3.27 As with all aspects of proposed legislation, the full implications will not be clear until the Bill(s) is/are published. All of the proposed changes outlined in Section 3 of this Board report will have implications on the processing of electoral registration applications and impose additional administrative burdens on the Electoral Services Core team and available resources.

Financial Implications:	None
Legal Implications:	Contained within the report
Crime and Disorder:	N/A
Equality and Diversity:	The Returning Officer (RO) is required to have due regard to the public sector equality duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when carrying out his duties.
Climate Change	N/A
Equality Impact Assessment:	N/A
Service Improvement Plan:	N/A
Corporate Plan:	This process aligns with the Strategic Priorities to 'Deliver effective services' and 'Empower our residents'
Risk Assessment:	Project Management Plan, Risk Register and Covid-19 specific Risk Register documents were all produced by the Returning Officer and submitted to the Electoral Commission, the Police Area

	Returning Officer (PCC election) and the County Returning Officer as normal 'custom and practise' for combined elections of this type held.
Background papers:	Policy and Board Report – Wednesday, 25 November 2020: May 2021 Local Government and Police & Crime Commissioner Elections
Appendices:	None
Report author/Lead Officer:	Graeme Jesty