

## Harlow Council Electoral Services Public awareness Strategy

### Project Summary

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise public awareness of electoral registration, The Annual Canvass, All Elections, boundary reviews, polling station reviews, electoral arrangements and how to become a candidate.</li> <li>• Increase the number of eligible people registered to vote</li> <li>• Encourage people to vote</li> <li>• Maximise our return of postal votes and reduce errors in postal voting</li> <li>• Introduce our young people to voting and encourage them to register as soon as they are old enough</li> <li>• Engage hard to reach groups to register and vote</li> <li>• Ensure candidates and agents are provided with sufficient information about the election and their role</li> </ul>
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All residents of Harlow</li> <li>• Young people / Older people</li> <li>• Other hard to reach groups</li> <li>• Home movers and new residents to the area</li> <li>• Candidates / Agents</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding from the cabinet Office ( if available)</li> <li>• We will use the resources from the electoral commission as much as possible</li> <li>• In the electoral services budget we do have a publicity budget of £1,000</li> <li>• Access support from other council departments, such as communications, council tax and outside agencies</li> </ul>
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other council departments, such as Council Tax</li> <li>• Other local authorities e.g. Essex County Council</li> <li>• Electoral Commission / Cabinet Office</li> <li>• Local youth council</li> <li>• Local ethnic minority bodies</li> <li>• Local Schools and Colleges</li> </ul>
Lead Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BK – Brian Keane, ERO / RO / Chief Executive</li> <li>• SH – Simon Hill, Head of Governance</li> <li>• AH – Alison Hodgson, Electoral Services Manager</li> <li>• NC – Niel Churchill, Communications Manager</li> </ul>

## Activities and Tasks – General, for all electors

Activity	Description / resources / channel	Audience	Timing	Lead Officer	Cost estimate	How we measure our success
Internet	<p>Electoral services have its own web pages on the Harlow Council website. <a href="http://www.harlow.gov.uk">www.harlow.gov.uk</a></p> <p>On our website we provide good general information about electoral registration and voting. This includes specific guidance on who can register, how and when to register, how to vote and absent voting.</p> <p>We include direct links to the Electoral Commission’s website and the register to vote website.</p> <p>We also have information about current elections in a latest news section and historic election results.</p>	All electors	All year round, updated as and when required	AH NC	Staff time	The website remains up to date and relevant in its content
Press releases Social Media	<p>Relevant information is provided to our communications department prior to the annual canvass and any elections or any reviews or other electoral events.</p> <p>We will have a front page banner and news item and relevant posts on the council facebook page and twitter accounts.</p> <p>Comms will liaise with the media and provide the necessary information.</p>	All electors	All year round, updated as and when required	AH NC	Staff time	Public feedback We monitor number of phone calls received to our helpline number.

Harlow Times	Council magazine delivered to every household in Harlow. Comms are given details for an article to be included about the Annual canvass and elections.	All electors	Published quarterly	NC	Staff time	Number of enquiries
Internal council publications	Use weekly information sheet and global emails to publicize electoral events.	Council staff and electors	As and when required	AH	Staff time	Number of enquires
Council Email signature	Use email signature to promote registration by providing a direct link to the register to vote website	All	All year round	AH	Staff time	Number of enquires
Annual Canvass poster	We put up a general poster to advertise the annual canvass. All posters are displayed at the civic centre, Latton Bush Centre, on our website and effectively placed in the locality.	All	Annual canvass	AH	Cost of printing posters, staff time	Number of enquires and registrations.
Annual Canvass info sheet	We provide an information sheet which canvassers deliver with the canvass form in order to provide residents with guidance on how to register and the deadline date to register for the December register.	All electors	Annual canvass	AH	Cost of paper, printing and staff time	Public feedback
Leaflet	We have produced a leaflet to send to send to new residents to encourage them to register online. We have provided it to our council tax and housing department.	Home movers and new residents	All year round (except during the annual canvass)	AH	Cost of leaflets and postage	Number of enquires / new registrations
Elections Notices	We ensure that all statutory notices are published on time and effectively placed in the locality.	All electors	During Electoral Timetable	AH	Cost of paper, printing	We check that the notices are placed appropriately in our

	All notices are displayed at the civic centre, Latton Bush Centre and on our website. The notice of election and notice of poll are placed in all polling stations and various public sites around the town.				and postage.	civic centre. Confirmation slip to be returned.
Poll Cards	We issue poll cards at the earliest opportunity in the election timetable and we aim to make them as informative and helpful as possible, including highlighting any new/different polling stations as well as the deadline dates for applying for or cancelling a postal vote.	All electors				The timely issue of the poll cards
Postal Vote information sheet	We provide a separate guidance sheet with clear instructions on how to complete and return the postal vote application form.  In addition we produce a clear and helpful information sheet, which includes pictures that is sent with the posting voting pack.  Our helpline number is available clearly on all documentation	All postal voters	Elections	AH	Cost of paper, printing and staff time	Postal vote returns statistics and public comment.  Monitor the phone calls that are received.
Weekly data matching with council tax and housing	We obtain a weekly report from council tax and housing in order to encourage those not registered to vote to do so. We will send out new residents a voter registration form.	All new residents	All year round	AH	Cost of printing and postage	Registration returns and electorate data

## Activities and Tasks – Targeting and engaging with low registration / hard to reach groups

Activity	Description / resources / channel	Audience	Timing	Lead Officer	Cost estimate	How we measure our success
Engaging young people	We have produced posters and a leaflet aimed at 16/17 year olds, which will be given to schools, colleges, etc for them to display and use with young people.  Attend the college during registration week to promote registration.	Young people	All year round, as and when required	AH	Staff time, possible cost of printing posters	Monitor feedback and number of registrations
Liaise with our youth council officer to endeavour to assist in local democracy events	We assist with the Harlow Youth Council elections when required.	16/17 year olds	All year round	AH	Staff time	General feedback
Engaging older people	We send a letter to the Sheltered Housing Managers at the start of the annual canvass advising them about the process and how to help their residents if necessary. We offer large-print copies of our forms / documents.	Elderly residents	Annual canvass	AH	Staff time	The letter is sent out by our Sheltered Housing Manager and feedback is gained from her.
Liaising with care homes	We have produced guidance for care homes information pack which we usually send out during the annual canvass or any other time as necessary.	Residents in a care or residential home	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	We liaise with the managers directly. We monitor any feedback.
Targeting HMOs	We send a letter to all HMO managers to advise them about the annual canvass and what to do.	HMO	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	Monitor canvass returns and feedback. Noticed an increase in the response rate following this activity.

Targeting home movers	We obtain a list of new council tax accounts each week and either send them a leaflet or add them to the register as pending and send the man ITR	Home movers	All year round	AH	Staff time, printing and postage of ITRs	Monitor new registrations
Engaging non-English speakers	We have produced a translation booklet for our canvassers to use when door-knocking.	Non-English residents	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	Canvasser feedback
Engaging non-English speakers	We have liaised with Integration Support Services and HEMU (Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella) to gain advice on which 9 alternative languages which should offer from ERS for people to use when registering by telephone at canvass.	Non-English residents	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	ERS reports – phone languages used. At present one person has used the polish translation.
Special category electors	We have direct links on our website to the Electoral Commission and register to vote website which details all the information on special category electors. (Please note that Harlow does not have a specific service area, such as a local army barracks)	Special Category Electors	All year round	AH	Staff time	We monitor the number of our special Category electors
Engaging candidates / agents	We provide candidates/agents with a comprehensive information pack which is supported by a face to face briefing session well before election day and includes details such as the polling stations, the count, key contact details, role of tellers and a copy of the code of conduct.	Candidates / Agents	Elections	AH	Staff time	We monitor feedback from candidates/agents

## Specific one-off Projects

- Canvass 2009

Placed an advert in our local Princess Alexandra Hospital guide which runs from August 2009 – August 2010. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund.

- Canvass 2009

During the canvass period 2009 we liaised with neighbouring authorities (Basildon, Braintree, Colchester, Maldon, Southend, Rochford, Uttlesford, Chelmsford, Thurrock) to produce a radio campaign which was carried out by the actor Matt Horne. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund. Basildon have carried out a survey of residents to obtain feedback.

- Parliamentary Election 2010

In addition to the registration advert detailed above two adverts were made ready for use when the general election 2010 was called. This was aired across Essex during the week of election with information about polling day. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund. Basildon have carried out a survey of residents to obtain feedback.

- 2011 - sent an 18<sup>th</sup> birthday card to all attainers on our register. Unfortunately it was too costly to continue this activity. (We tried to gain a list of young people aged 16/17 to ensure that they are not missed off the register. We have made contact with Essex county Council but they have been unable to supply us with any information.)

- Parliamentary Referendum 2011

We distributed posters to various public sites across the town e.g. public library. We arranged for an advert to go in the local newspaper. We had a link to the public information booklet on our website as well as victor the vote counter.

- 2012 - A meeting was held with a new Councillor who is responsible for youth & Citizenship where it was explained what we have done and she was given a copy of our poster and leaflet.

- District Election May 2012

We arranged for an advert to go in the local newspaper.

- Police & Crime Commissioner Election Nov 2012

We distributed the Electoral Commission's pink poster to various public sites across the town e.g. public library, including all polling stations. As this was a national election radio and TV adverts were arranged by the Electoral Commission and the PARO. We included links on our website to the Home Office, Essex Police Authority and the Electoral Commission.

We had a number of complaints from people who had not heard anything about the election or the candidates. They had not received the information booklet. They could not access a website to get information on the candidates and had to wait weeks before being sent the information in the post.

- 2018 - Visited the local college to encourage students to register
- 2019 - Visited the local college to encourage students to register