

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Open				
Lead Member: Leader, Cllr Alistair Beales Email: cllr.alistair.beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk			Other Members consulted:	
Lead Officer: Monitoring Officer E-mail: alexa.baker@west-norfolk.gov.uk			Other Officers consulted: Chief Executive and Electoral Services Manager	
Financial Implications NO	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES	Equality Impact Assessment req'd YES	Risk Management Implications YES

Date of Meeting: 27 November 2025

TITLE: APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL RETURNING OFFICER

RECOMMENDED:

Summary

The purpose of this report is to firstly seek approval of the formal appointment of the Chief Executive to act as the Local Returning Officer (LRO) for the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority Mayoral Elections.

Secondly, amendments to the Council's Scheme of Delegation are sought to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to act as Local Returning Officer for all relevant elections conducted within the Borough Council area.

Recommendation

Council Resolves:

1. The Chief Executive is appointed to act as the Local Returning Officer for the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority Mayoral Elections.
2. The amendment to the Scheme of Delegation set out at section 2.3 of this report is approved so that the Chief Executive is delegated authority to act as Local Returning Officer for all relevant elections conducted within the Borough Council area.

Reason for Decision

The appointment of the Chief Executive as Local Returning Officer ensures the Council meets its statutory obligations for administering elections associated with the Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority. Delegating this responsibility within the Scheme of Delegation provides clarity, continuity and operational

efficiency, reducing the risk of non-compliance and ensuring that electoral processes can be delivered effectively and without delay.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority will be responsible for holding mayoral elections as part of the new devolved governance arrangements. Each constituent authority is required to designate a Local Returning Officer who will be responsible for administering the poll within their local area.
- 1.2 The Chief Executive has historically undertaken Returning Officer (RO) and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) responsibilities for the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, in line with statutory requirements and established practice.

2. Appointment of Local Returning Officer

- 2.1 Under the relevant election legislation, local authorities are required to appoint an LRO for their area where an election is taking place over more than one authority area. The LRO is personally responsible for the proper administration of the election process, including but not limited to:
 - publishing the notice of election
 - administering the nomination process
 - printing the ballot papers
 - publishing the notice of poll, statement of persons nominated and notice of situation of polling stations
 - the provision of polling stations
 - appointing Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
 - managing the postal voting process
 - verifying and counting the votes
 - declaring the result
- 2.2 A Local Returning Officer is a distinct designation to a Returning Officer, applicable where elections are taking place over more than one authority. To ensure compliance and minimise risk to the process, it is recommended that the Chief Executive should be formally appointed as Local Returning Officer for the upcoming Mayoral Elections, with this designation being formalised into the Scheme of Delegation.
- 2.3 The proposed change to the Scheme of Delegation is at section 10 entitled 'Council', and will be the addition of the words underlined and in italics:

Chief Executive

To act as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer *or Local Returning Officer* for all elections, Parish Polls and Referendums and to take

such action as is necessary to carry out those duties, including appointing Deputy Electoral Registration Officers and Deputy Returning Officers or Deputy Local Returning Officers.

3. Policy Implications

The proposed change aligns with existing electoral governance arrangements and does not alter the Council's established policy framework.

4. Financial Implications

None.

5. Personnel Implications

None, the Chief Executive already undertakes Returning Officer functions.

6. Environmental Considerations

None

7. Statutory and Risk Considerations

The Council is required to appoint an LRO.

The Council's Scheme of Delegation sets out designations for the Chief Executive to act as Returning Officer, however to ensure compliance with the legislation and de-risk any form of challenge on procedure, the Chief Executive should be explicitly appointed and delegated to act as Local Returning Officer.

8. Equality Impact Assessment Pre-Screen (EIA)

8.1 Attached – neutral impact