Annex: 1 - Electoral Reform Services comments on the ballot arrangements

Summary

Electoral Reform Services (ERS) provides a fully managed in-house balloting service. As the Independent Body, ERS has been appointed to ensure that the ballot is administered securely and independently. ERS will mail the ballot papers to residents, receive and count the votes through multi-channel response methods, verify that they have been cast legitimately, and issue the result.

Project Initiation & Methodology

From the outset, RBKuT is assigned a Project Manager who oversees the administration of the ballot, as well as acting as the single point of contact between ERS and the contact at the council.

Alongside this, an internal project team is formed consisting of a representative from each relevant ERS department and chaired by the Project Manager. This ensures each department is made fully aware of all ballot metrics, timescales and client requirements.

ERS will work with RBKuT to formulate a project timetable which facilitates a successful ballot. Considering previous Estate Regeneration Ballots administered by ERS, it is expected that the ballot will run to the following timetable:

Day	Action
37	Landlord Offer Published / Copy and data due
30	Live Proofs to client / Voting-Channels Tested
23	Ballot Paper Despatch
7	Extra Turnout Services (Reminder Letter, Door Knocking, etc...)
0	Close of Ballot
-1	Issue of Result

The Voting Process

The ballot is administered in the form of a hard-copy ballot paper, securely posted to residents via Royal Mail 1st class.

Voting documents are assembled into mailing packs using ERS' in-house automated mailing equipment fitted with weight and thickness sensors to detect and eliminate miss-fills.

Prior to this, the names and address details of eligible residents, provided to ERS securely by RBKuT, are mail-sorted to obtain postal discounts.

Once in receipt of their ballot paper, residents have the option to vote by post or online. Additional voting methods are available.

To vote by post, residents return the hard-copy ballot paper to ERS' secure facility in the pre-paid reply envelope provided.

To vote online, residents use their unique security codes to access the dedicated Cambridge Road Estate voting platform. To prevent duplicate votes, each unique security code may only be used once.

Throughout the balloting period, the ERS Results Analyst and Project Manager undertake regular audits of returned ballot papers. In addition, robust procedures are in place to audit online votes. For example, ERS can review votes against IP addresses and actively monitor for unusual activity from one account or address. If a resident has voted both by online voting and by post, only the first vote received will be counted.

Ballot papers are scanned digitally into our system to be counted and verified against residents' unique security codes.

All votes received by ERS are stored in the voting database and routine data queries are performed by the Results Analyst to ensure the integrity of the data. The voting database sits behind a visible platform which is not accessible by the council, resident or any non-authorised ERS personnel.

Towards the end of the balloting period it is recommended that additional voting packs are posted to non-voters. This process often takes place around 7 days before the close of ballot and encourages increased turnout. Other additional services designed to further improve turnout are also available.

Voting closes at 5pm on the chosen day. Any votes received after this time will not be counted.

A final audit and collation of the result is performed by the ERS Results Analyst and Project Manager within 48 hours of the close of the poll.

Only when the project manager is entirely happy that all votes have been suitably audited and counted, the result will be issued in the form of a written Result of Vote. ERS is also able to declare the result in person if required.