

Title of Report:	Local Government Elections 2027
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources
Date of Meeting:	22 September 2026
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	No

Linkage to Council Plan (2026-31)	
Strategic Theme	Engaging & Communicating With Our Customers
Outcome	Ensure communities across all District Electoral Areas feel connected to the Council and able to influence local decisions
Lead Officer	Chief Executive – Deputy Returning Officer Director Of Corporate Services – Assistant Deputy Returning Officer

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	May 2027

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	TBC
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital/Revenue	Revenue – Election Reserve
Code	3107
Staffing Costs	Included

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	No
Legal Opinion Obtained	No

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes /No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes /No	Date:
	Screening Completed	Yes /No	Date:

Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes /No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes /No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes /No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to provide Members with a further update for next year's Local Government Elections.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The date for the Local Government Election is set in statute as the first Thursday in May every four years.
- 2.2 The Assembly Elections are held the first Thursday in May every five years.
- 2.3 Members will already be aware that the Secretary of State has announced that there will be combined Elections for both the Local Government and Assembly Elections with Polling Day taking place on Thursday 06 May 2027.

3.0 Election Legislation

- 3.1 It is expected that the UK Government Combined Elections legislation will be laid in Parliament on 13 October 2027. This instrument gives rise to the rules for the Combined Elections.
- 3.2 The UK Government is also laying a host of other new laws and for 2027, which include:
- four new forms of ID in Polling Stations (PASS Card: Proof of Age Standards Scheme, Commonwealth Passport (UK, Ireland & EU already accepted), UK Veteran's Card: UK Armed Forces Veterans Card, Disabled Person's Parking Scheme (NI or GB))
 - the calling out of verified Elector names in Polling Stations for Polling Agents to review is to be stopped – this is in line with changes in GB

- the permitted Councillor candidate spend rises from £1,500 to £2,400
- 3.3 The issue of “Double” candidates (Assembly and Local Government) was raised with UK Government. The law now allows until Thursday 13 May 2027 for a Councillor to come into post. However, this does not address Council Committee formation timelines and further information will be shared once it becomes available.

4.0 Complexity

- 4.1 Combined Elections present a number of significant operational and logistical challenges including:
- 1.45m Poll Cards
 - 2.9m Ballot Papers
 - 1,200 Candidates
 - 600 Polling Places (3,000 Polling Stations)
 - 8,000 Staff – 5,000 poll and 3,000 Count
- 4.2 Each Elector will get two ballot papers. The Council Ballot Paper will be yellow in colour and the Assembly Ballot Paper will be white. At the Polling Station, both Ballot Papers should be put into the same Ballot Box.

5.0 Postal Voting

- 5.1 Postal Votes will be issued by an automated system which will reduce the time taken for this process and this will be enabled by the centralised printing of Ballot Papers previously agreed by the Working Group.

6.0 Polling Places Scheme Consultation

- 6.1 The Consultation for the Polling Places Scheme was presented to Council at its Meeting on 01 September 2026 with a deadline of 02 October 2026 for responses.
- 6.2 The proposed scheme will ensure that Voters can cast both Ballots in a single Polling Place and removes the requirement for split Polling Places.
- 6.3 The final Polling Places Scheme will be published in November 2026 with only the Chief Electoral Officer being able to make changes to the Scheme after date, and only for operational reasons.
- 6.4 Electors will be informed of their Polling Place via their Poll Card and for 95% of Electors, there will be no change.

7.0 Interactive Map

- 7.1 EONI has devised an interactive map which can be accessed by clicking the following link:

<https://nielectoral-maps.wheredoivote.co.uk/map/#map=12.35/55.17134/-6.57406>

- 7.2 Users can choose to view the map by Council, DEA or Assembly boundaries whilst in standard map view(OSNI) or aerial photo view. These options are available on the menu to the left of the map.

- 7.3 Users can click on any Polling Place and find its:

- Address
- Polling Place ID
- Council
- Constituency, DEA, Total Number of Boxes and Total Electorate

- 7.4 There is a facility available to enter a postcode and the map will then identify the relevant Polling Place for that address.

8.0 Count Process

- 8.1 Following the close of the Poll at 10:00pm on Thursday 06 May 2027, Ballot Boxes will be transported to the Eikon Exhibition Centre and Meadowbank Sports Arena which will be the main Count Centres for the combined Elections.
- 8.2 Joint Verification will take place on Friday 07 May 2027 after which, the Council Ballots will be resealed in the Ballot Boxes. Causeway Coast and Glens Ballot Boxes will then be transferred to Coleraine Leisure Centre on Sunday 09 May 2027.
- 8.3 The Local Government Count will take place on Monday 10 May 2027 and Tuesday 11 May 2027 at Coleraine Leisure Centre.
- 8.4 Each Council has nominated Senior Count Staff to work in the Joint Verification / Assembly Council over 7 – 9 May 2027.
- 8.5 In preparation for this, Joint Verification Rehearsal sessions are planned for September and October.

9.0 Finance

- 9.1 Members will already be aware that the Assembly Elections are paid for by the UK Government, whereas Local Government Elections are paid for by Local Councils.
- 9.2 The estimated cost to Council for the 2027 Local Government Elections in 2027 is currently £650K.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the information provided above and be advised that Officers will continue to work in preparation for the Local Government Elections 2027 and also continue to represent Council on the Electoral Office NI's Steering/Working Groups.