



Title of Report:	Local Government Elections 2027
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources
Date of Meeting:	23 June 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 Elections 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 **Clarification from the Northern Ireland Office**

3.1 The letter from the Secretary of State, attached at Appendix 1, provides further clarification on the Government's intentions for the combined Elections.

3.2 The longer Count process, will require amending a provision that sets out the day that Councillors will take office following the Elections. This will be amended from the fourth day to the seventh day after the Elections which means that Councillors will take office on Thursday 13 May 2027. This will revert back to the fourth day following an Election thereafter.

3.3 Members should note that additional types of ID will be added to the accepted Voter ID list and these are detailed in the attached.

3.4 The Secretary of State's letter also outlines the intention to update Candidates' expenditure limits for Local Election Candidates, bringing them to the same level as in England.

4.0 Election Steering/Working Groups

4.1 The Electoral Office NI has established a Local Council Combined Elections 2027 Steering Group along with various Working Groups on which Council is represented.

5.0 Finance

5.1 Members may already be aware that the Assembly Elections are paid for by the UK Government, whereas Local Government Elections are paid for by Local Councils.

5.2 The estimated cost to Council for the 2027 Local Government Elections in 2027 is currently £600K.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 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.



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10 June 2026

Our reference: MC/ 26/416

Dear David,

I am writing regarding the forthcoming Northern Ireland Assembly and local council elections, both of which are scheduled to take place on 6 May 2027.

The law currently requires that the elections be conducted as two stand alone elections held on the same day, resulting in a duplication of processes and considerable inefficiencies. I intend to resolve these issues through secondary legislation.

The legislation will allow the Government to combine the two polls and for the Electoral Office to operate more efficiently and reduce administrative pressure. My officials have engaged closely with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland on the proposed legislation.

My intention is to replicate many of the provisions that were legislated for previously, when Assembly and local elections were last held on the same day in 2011, to include:

- 1 poll card per voter;
- 1 Polling Station per voter;

- Different colour ballot papers for local and Assembly ballots;
- 1 Ballot Box in each Polling Station;
- A combined ballot verification process - this means electors will place both ballots in one ballot box which are later separated by count centre staff ahead of the separate count processes;
- 1 Register per Polling Station, and;
- Joint instructions for voters in polling booths.

My intention is to also prescribe the timetable for verification and the count. The intended timetable is as follows:

- Friday 7 May (verification of ballot papers Local Elections / Assembly Elections) & Stage 1 of Assembly Count;
- Saturday 8 May (further stages of Assembly Count through to close);
- Sunday 9 May (no public process: movement of Ballot Boxes to Local Government count centres);
- Monday 10 May (Local Council Count – Day 1);
- Tuesday 11 May (Local Council Count – Day 2);

The longer count process will also require amending a provision that sets out the day that councillors take office following the 2027 election. The law currently sets out that councillors should take office on the fourth day following an election. I intend to amend this, for the 6 May 2027 elections only, so that councillors should take office on the seventh day after the election, which will be Thursday 13 May 2027. This will only apply for the combined 2027 election and will revert to the fourth day thereafter.

As it stands, these elections will see a shorter than usual timetable, which has the potential to create challenges for those responsible for the delivery of the elections. To alleviate some of these pressures, my intention is to extend the election timetable for both the Assembly and local elections taking place on 6 May 2027. This will mean dissolving the Assembly on the 23 March rather than 31 March in 2027. My officials have engaged closely with the Assembly Speaker's office, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Electoral Commission on this matter. We do not anticipate that this will have any negative impact on Assembly business, which is scheduled to have concluded before this date, and it will provide critical additional time for the administrative processes that are critical to the success of our elections. The local election period will be aligned with the Assembly election period.

I intend to add the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card, the Proof of Age Standards Card (PASS card), the Commonwealth Passport, and the Blue Badge to the list of accepted voter ID in Northern Ireland ahead of the May 2027 elections. These forms of ID are already accepted in polling stations in GB and adding them to the list of accepted voter ID in Northern Ireland will improve the accessibility of elections in Northern Ireland.

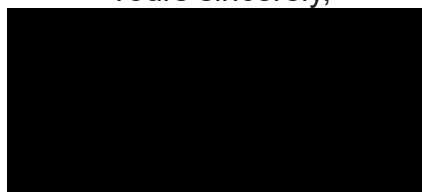
I also intend to uprate candidate expenditure limits for local election candidates, bringing the amount that local election candidates in NI can spend on campaigning to the same level as in England. This change will ensure fair candidate spending limits for NI local elections that reflect changes in the value of money since they were first set. Candidate spending will continue to be regulated by the Electoral Commission (EC) in the usual way.

My officials are working towards laying the various pieces of legislation in the coming months to allow sufficient Parliamentary time for debate before these come into force well ahead of the May 2027 elections. It is important to note that all of the above remains subject to parliamentary time and approval.

I hope that this letter provides helpful clarification of the Government's intentions on this matter. I understand that the Chief Electoral Officer will be providing further detail on operational planning for the elections.

I look forward to working with you to make these elections a success.

Yours sincerely,



**THE RT HON HILARY BENN MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**