The Electoral Commission

Supplementary Estimate 2025/26: Estimates Memorandum

1 Overview

Our Estimates Memorandum reflects the joint accountability and funding of the Electoral Commission, between the UK, Welsh (the Senedd) and Scottish parliaments.

1.1 Objectives

Our purpose

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK.

We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity.

Our strategic priorities

Our priorities for the next five years are informed by past experiences, and our understanding of current and future challenges. We've drawn on insights, data and evidence from our core work, and have listened to our broad network of stakeholders. These insights and conversations have shaped the following five priorities:

- Supporting voters and increasing participation
- Modernising the electoral system
- Safeguarding and protecting the system
- Leading an informed debate about the future of elections
- Strengthening the Electoral Commission

Our five-year UK Corporate Plan has been developed after the UK Parliament General Election in July 2024 and sets out what we aim to do from 2025/26 to 2029/30.

1.2 Spending controls

The Commission is bound to deliver its functions within the budget each parliament provides.

In line with other UK public bodies, the Electoral Commission's net spending is broken down into several different control totals, for which the UK Parliament's approval is sought. Our expenditure, net of contributions from the Welsh and Scottish Parliaments, constitutes our formal control totals voted. These are:

- Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit ("Resource DEL") – a net limit comprising day to day running costs, less income,
- Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit ("Capital DEL") – investment in capital equipment mainly comprising IT hardware and software,
- Resource Annually Managed Expenditure ("Resource AME") – take up, movements in value and release of resource accounting provisions,
- Capital Annually Managed Expenditure ("Capital AME") – take up, movements in value and release of capital accounting provisions.

In addition, spending on Scottish and Welsh devolved powers must be delivered within the funding provided by the relevant parliament. However, these budgets do not constitute voted spending controls submitted to the UK Parliament.

Finally, the Commission also manages the budget for Electoral Commissioners. Their fees are paid directly by the UK Consolidated Fund, similar to judicial salaries, and are therefore not voted annually by Parliament.

1.3 Comparison of net spending totals sought

Table 1 overleaf shows how the net spending totals sought for the Commission compares with the Main and Supplementary Estimated. This reflects the changes to activity, spending and funding discussed in subsequent sections.

Table 1

Comparison of control totals:

Amounts sought for 2025/26 (Column 1)		Comparison to original budget for 2025/26 (Main Estimate)		
Voted control total	**£ m**	**£ m**	**Change £ m**	**Change %**
RDEL	46.10	42.66	-3.44	7.5%
CDEL	2.11	2.11	0.00	0.0%
Net DEL	48.21	44.77	-3.44	7.1%
RAME	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.0%
CAME	0.10	0.10	0.00	0.0%
Total	48.36	44.92	-3.44	7.1%
Net cash requirement *	46.57	43.13	-3.44	7.4%

*This represents the net cash impact of control totals

1.4 Key drivers of spending changes since original budget this year

Material changes since this year's Main Estimate - The main changes in resource delivery of (£3.4m) are due to the following:

- By-elections: (£150,000)

  The Electoral Commission includes budget for the requirement of advertising campaigns associated with By-Elections, with an assumed cost of £50,000 per event. During this financial year we have not been required to create a separate advertising campaign for any of the By-Elections that have taken place, and don't envisage any requirement to do so in the remainder of the financial year.

- Voter Forms: (£300,000)

  The Electoral Commission is required to budget for any proposed changes to the forms used by voters in Elections. However, we have been awaiting guidance from Government on what the proposed changes will be and as a result given timelines to implement the changes, we will not be able to introduce these this financial year and none of the budget will be used.

- Corporate Performance Reporting system: (£140,000)

  The Electoral Commission has been able to utilise existing in-house technologies as a replacement for our Corporate Performance Reporting System (Pentana). This has led to efficiency savings on what we originally anticipated a replacement system to cost, when procuring from a 3rd party.

- 2017 Utility Rates rebate: (£170,000)

  During 2018, the Electoral Commission appointed an agent to challenge the 2017 rateable value of the office accommodation in London. Following discussions with our agent, we agreed to go to arbitration. Formal documents were submitted to the Valuation Tribunal in September 2021, and our case was finally heard in June of this year, which resulted in the significant reduction in the rateable value, and subsequent refund.

- Contract efficiency savings: (£200,000)

  We have re-negotiated a managed service contract with a vendor, which allowed us to consolidate services which were previously across separate contracts, which unlocked savings. Other contractual savings have also been identified which have created an underspend.

- May-25 Election campaigns: (£85,000)

  A reduced number of local elections took place in May 2025, The Electoral Commission was able to reduce expenditure on the Registration and Voter ID campaigns. Now that the event and the campaign cycle has finished, this underspend will not be required.

- Recruitment delays: (£460,000)

  The Electoral Commission had an ambitious plan for growth within the Corporate Plan, where significant recruitments were planned to support the portfolio of work. Although a Talent Acquisition team has now been established, this wasn't in place at the start of the year, and we have experienced delays in recruitment which have generated underspend.

- Northern Ireland Assembly Elections in 2024: (£275,000)

  Legislation mandates that if a Northern Ireland Executive is not formed by 18 January 2024, an election must be called. In preparation for this contingency, the Commission had budgeted for estimated contingency costs of approximately £275,000 for this financial year, which are now not needed.

- National Insurance Contribution Increase Placeholder: (£320,000)

  The autumn budget announced an increase to both the national insurance contribution increase as well as a lower tax-free threshold. This came ~~,~~ after we had submitted our Scotland and Wales estimates, so we included a contingency to cover this increase. The contingency we included hasn't been required as expected due to delays in recruiting roles.

- Corporate Plan savings: (£700,000)

  The Electoral Commission set out an ambitious plan for growth as part of the Corporate Plan, with numerous programmes of work commencing during 2025/26. Whilst much of this work is now underway with notable milestones already reached, resourcing the projects sufficiently to deliver, took a period of time to implement which led to an underspend.

- RPI Non-Pay inflation: (£400,000)

  The Electoral Commission has contract renewals annually which are subject to inflationary price increases. As inflation has fallen, and following negotiation from our procurement team, the increases were not as significant as budgeted.

- General Contingency: (£200,000)

  The Electoral Commission retains a contingent budget which can be used in any exceptional circumstances which may be required, such as any major repair works or significant events which would be unknown at the time of budgeting. This sum is being surrendered as we deem the amount, we are currently keeping sufficient based on trends around our use of contingency funds.

1.5 Reserve claims and spending pressures

The Electoral Commission is currently unaware of any specific spending pressures that have not been included within the above submission.

1.6 Funding: other spending announcements

This section recaps the funding arrangements for the Commission and considers the medium-term financial strategy set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Commission is funded by the UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru. Elections in Northern Ireland are a reserved matter and thus funded by the UK Parliament. The direct costs of our work under the powers of each parliament are attributed to the relevant parliament. This includes relevant event costs and activities such as supporting Returning Officers, raising public awareness and increasing voter education in the relevant parts of the UK. Other corporate costs, including depreciation, are shared in proportion to population.

Event budgets vary according to the electoral cycle. The anticipated timing of the next UKPGE is expected to fall in 2029/30. The next elections in Scotland and Wales will occur in May 2026.

1.7 New policies and programmes; ambit changes

Please see section 3.3 for details on new Corporate Plan programme. Work on Corporate Plan will cost £5.4m in year one.

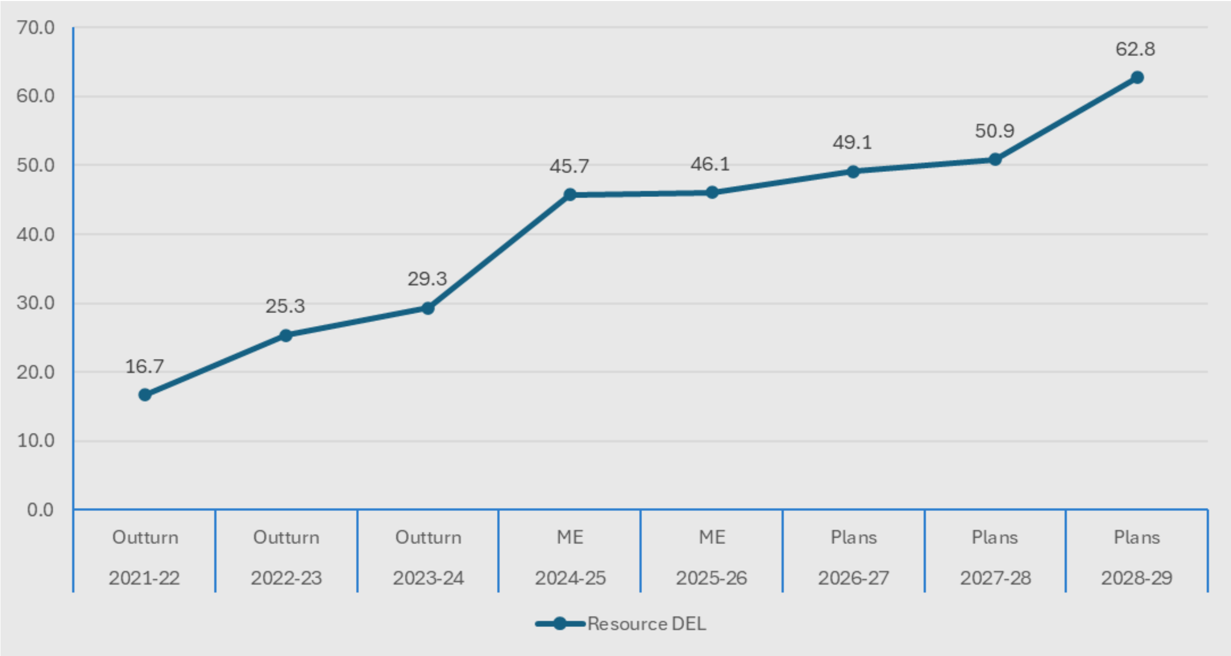
The Commission has not made any changes to the ambit of its main estimate in this year.

1.8 Administration costs and efficiency plans

In line with other UK Parliamentary bodies, the Commission does not have an administration budget. Costs that would be included in administration are included in the Commission’s core budget and funded proportionately by each of the parliaments.

1.9 Spending Trends

Our expenditure is anticipated to increase by a small amount over next 3 years as the Corporate Plan activity increases. Large increase in 28/29 represents increased expected expenditure in line with Parliamentary General Election. These are unchanged as per the Main Estimate memorandum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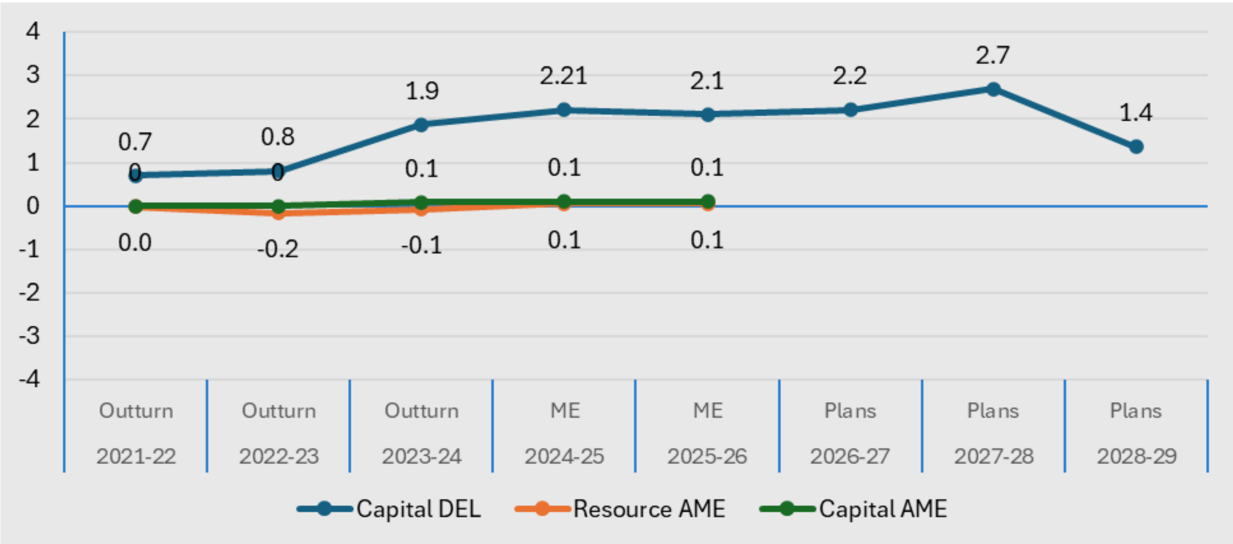
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ME 2025-26
Plans 2026-27
Plans 2027-28
Plans 2028-29
Capital DEL
Resource AME
Capital AME

1.10 Other funding announcements

None.

2 Spending and income detail

2.1 Explanations of changes in spending and income

Amounts sought for 2025/26 (Column 1)		**Comparison to original budget for 2025/26 (Main Estimate)**		
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Total	48.36	44.92	-3.44	7.1%
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- Changes have only been made to our RDEL budget.
- There is no income change.
- All variance explanations are detailed in section 1.4.

2.2 Restructuring

None

2.3 Ring fenced budgets

The Commission is not subject to budgetary control by HM Treasury and as a result has only one formal ring-fenced budget which is Depreciation. However, we do have several distinct budgets that are separated:

- The Scotland and Wales funding is solely for devolved direct activity and a proportion of corporate costs. Costs allocated to Welsh and Scottish elections are returned to respective governments should the full amount not be spent.
- The budget for Policy Development Grant is set in secondary legislation, issued by the UK Government at £2 million each year. This budget is wholly funded by the

UK Parliament. It is included as a separate Estimates line, ensuring our previous practice of keeping this funding separate from our operating costs.

2.4 Changes to contingent liabilities

The Commission has no material contingent liabilities, and this is not expected to change during the year.

3 Priorities and performance

3.1 How spending relates to objectives

The following table shows how expenditure against each subhead contributes to our strategic objectives and the key factors that underpin this work.

		Strategic objectives					Key factors		
	Estimates subhead	Supporting voters and increasing participation	Modernising the electoral system	Safeguarding and protecting the system	Leading an informed debate about the future of elections	Strengthening the Electoral Commission	We demonstrate independence and integrity	We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued	We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively
A	Electoral Commission Expenditure	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
B	Policy Development Grant		•						

3.2 Measures of performance

Please refer to our KPI and KSI section of our Corporate Plan

3.3 Major projects

Please refer to Corporate Plan

4 Other information

4.1 Additional specific information required by the Speaker's Committee

None.

5 Accounting officer approval

The Accounting Officer for the Electoral Commission is the Chief Executive. The information in this Estimates Memorandum has been approved by me as Accounting Officer.

Vijay Rangarajan

Chief Executive Officer

19th December 2025