

Written evidence submitted by Civica Election Services (EHC 04)

Background

Since 2010, Civica Election Services (CES) has provided ad hoc consultancy support to the House Administration team who administer the Deputy Speaker and Committee elections.

Formerly known as Electoral Reform Services, CES are the UK's leading supplier of election services, with over 100 years' experience of administering elections. Each year, CES supports hundreds of organisations across the public and private sectors to deliver trusted voting projects.

For over twenty years, CES has administered Hereditary Peer by-elections and Lord Speaker elections for the House of Lords. In 2010, following the changes to Elections within the House of Commons, CES was approached by the House Administration team for consultancy support as needed, typically at the start of a new parliament. Our consultancy services primarily involve training in how to count preferential voting systems – specifically the Alternative Vote and the Single Transferable Vote, supporting preparation for count days, and providing on-the-day support for counts administered by the House Administration team.

CES role in training and preparation for count days

CES has developed training materials with the House Administration team to ensure that all those involved in counting the preferential voting elections understand the principles of preferential voting and how to conduct such elections.

The training materials are designed to first establish the basic principles and then practically apply that learning via a series of prepared mock counts with known results. The mock counts have been designed to step the team through scenarios of increasing complexity so that the House Administration team go into the live counts confident that they have experience of the different counting steps that may be necessary in the real elections. Via the mock counts the team will have practised handling the more complex counting scenarios such as ties, non-transferable papers, recalculating the quota or vote now required for election.

The most straight forward mock count prepared is a simple 1 to elect by Alternative Vote as required for the select committee chair elections. Other, more complex mock counts in the training materials cover how to fill multiple vacancies via the Single Transferable Vote and the application of the counting constraints to ensure that:

- two Deputy Speakers (the Chairman of Ways and Means and the Second Deputy Chairman) come from the opposite side of the House to that from which the Speaker was drawn
- that the First Deputy Chairman comes from the same side of the House as that from which the Speaker was drawn
- that among the Speaker and three Deputies there should be at least one man and one woman.

A few weeks before the elections, a team of expert trainers from Civica Election Services facilitate training sessions using these prepared materials for those in the House Administration team who will be part of the counting team on election day. The more experienced members of the House Administration team take the lead in these mock counts with CES trainers on hand to answer

questions and verify that the outcome of each stage of counting during the training exercise matches the known result.

CES will also provide other ad hoc support requested in the lead up to the elections. For example loaning ballot boxes for use on election day and being available for consultancy guidance such as the options to consider when a candidate was elected unopposed by the constraints in 2020.

CES on the day support at count

The House Administration team may request us to attend on the day of count so that we are available in the event of any query they would like assurance around. Our role is limited to providing ad hoc support on request by the House Administration team responsible for counting the election on behalf of the Speaker.

Typically, we do not attend for the count of Select Committee Chair elections as with these elections being run relatively frequently and on a 1-to-elect basis the House Administration team are confident in their understanding of how to count such elections. Our attendance is more typical at the count for the start of a new Parliament Deputy Speaker election where a more complex STV count with counting constraints is conducted. There is no formal verification or signoff of the results by CES; the purpose of our attendance is to be readily available in the event of a query and provide some assurance to the team conducting the count that they are following all of the necessary counting steps.

May 2020 online ballots for Select Committee Chair posts

In May 2020, during a period of Covid lockdown when [temporary procedures were in place](#), CES administered online ballots on behalf of the House to elect Select Committee Chairs for the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and Committee on Standards.

Members were emailed a unique secure link to cast their ballot online on May 6 2020 and at the close of polls the House Administration team were provided with a copy of the results sheet calculated by our eSTV counting system and verified by our project management team.

9 May 2025