



The Electoral Office  
for  
Northern Ireland

**CORPORATE PLAN  
2006 –09**

**and**

**ANNUAL PLAN 2006-07**

# Foreword

I am pleased to present the Corporate Plan of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland for 2006-2009 and the Annual Business Plan for the year commencing 1 April 2006. Both were substantially drafted prior to the retirement of Denis Stanley as Chief Electoral Officer on 31 March 2006. The staff of the Electoral Office would wish to pay formal tribute to Denis for leading the organisation so effectively through a period of such significant change over the past five and a half years.

His successor, Douglas Bain, will take up the post of Chief Electoral Officer on 1 June 2006. Douglas is joining us at the beginning of another cycle of change for the Electoral Office. As outlined in the Corporate Plan, autumn 2006 will be a milestone – the last annual registration canvass in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, when it becomes law (anticipated later this year), will introduce a new approach to maintaining the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register. The Electoral Administration Bill, currently passing through Westminster, will also alter to some extent how future elections are conducted throughout the United Kingdom.

The work of the Electoral Office in the medium to longer term will focus on the range of strategies outlined in the Corporate Plan. The Annual Business Plan identifies the operational objectives and targets which it intends to achieve in 2006-07. Both plans are challenging, especially in such a time of fundamental change. Within its resources, the Electoral Office is, as ever, committed to delivering the best quality electoral services to electors and all others with an interest in the democratic process in Northern Ireland.

JUNE BUTLER  
Assistant Chief Electoral Officer  
22 May 2006

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# Introduction and Background

## 1

### The Chief Electoral Officer

1.1 The Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (CEO) is a Crown appointment, independent of Government in his interpretation and administration of electoral law. He is appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under Section 14 of the Electoral Law Act (NI) 1962 as amended by Article 6 of the Electoral Law (NI) Order 1972 and the Northern Ireland (Modification of Enactments No 1) Order 1973. The CEO is Registration Officer for all constituencies in Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup> He is also the Returning Officer for all elections in and referendums specific to the Province.

1.2 The CEO is required to carry out the functions conferred on him by law. His main duties in this regard are:

- Administering electoral law and delivering electoral services.
- Conducting all elections and referendums in Northern Ireland, including ensuring there are suitable arrangements and equipment in place to do so.
- Reporting annually to the Secretary of State on the performance of his functions.

In addition, the CEO is expected to deliver accurate and timely advice on electoral administration to the Secretary of State and to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission.

1.3 The CEO's main managerial point of contact with Government on matters relating to electoral policy and law and to the organisation and administration of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) is the Rights and International Relations Division of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). The NIO includes the CEO in the consultation process in respect of any proposed relevant legislative changes. It also ensures that the CEO is made aware of any policy developments on electoral issues that emanate from other Government Departments.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 6.1

1.4 The CEO has established a working relationship with the Electoral Commission, both at the centre and local level. This recognises the respective statutory roles and objectives of both bodies and provides a sound operational interface for separate and combined activities aimed at providing effective and efficient electoral services in Northern Ireland. A Memorandum of Understanding agreed among the Commission, the EONI and the Northern Ireland Office defining the basis of these relationships, will be in place by August 2006.

1.5 The CEO may delegate the performance of his functions and the EONI was established to deliver electoral services. The CEO has delegated the day to day administration of his functions to the staff of the EONI. He remains responsible for the overall management and staffing of the organisation and is responsible for ensuring that the requirements of law on equality, disability, data protection and freedom of information are properly addressed in all the activities carried out on his behalf.

### **The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland**

1.6 The EONI operates through a headquarters and nine area electoral offices in seven locations across Northern Ireland. Two of the area electoral offices are co-located in central Belfast alongside EONI headquarters. Two other area electoral offices are co-located in Banbridge and the remaining offices currently operate from Londonderry, Omagh, Newtownabbey, Newtownards and Ballymoney. The latter office will be relocated to Ballymena from June 2006. There is an area electoral office within each Northern Ireland parliamentary constituency or within a constituency adjacent to it. The EONI presently has 44 permanent staff of which 16 are located in headquarters. However, for elections and during the period of a registration canvass, many more temporary staff are also employed. Around 4500 polling station and counting staff are required for a major election and about 50 temporary office staff. Approximately 900 canvassers are employed on short-term contracts for the annual autumn canvass and over 100 temporary office staff in the same period.

1.7 The operations of the EONI are funded by the Northern Ireland Office and the costs of running elections by HM Treasury through the NIO, other than expenditure on elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly which is funded by the Assembly. The

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is accountable to Parliament for all expenditure by the EONI. The administrative relationship between the EONI and the NIO and their respective responsibilities in this context have been agreed and will be recorded formally in a Management Statement to be prepared by August 2006.

1.8 The EONI headquarters is located at:

St Anne's House

15 Church Street

Belfast BT1 1ER

All parts of the EONI can be contacted by telephone at (028) 9044 6688

HQ Fax (028) 9023 5612

Email: [info@eoni.gov.uk](mailto:info@eoni.gov.uk)

Internet: [www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk](http://www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk)

## **Overall Aim and Objectives**

### **2**

2.1 The Overall Aim of the EONI is:

**To serve democracy by providing all electors with the opportunity to exercise their electoral franchise freely and conveniently. To this end the EONI will administer the CEO's functions as defined in law in a comprehensive, professional, timely, effective, efficient and economic manner equally across all the people of Northern Ireland.**

2.2 Accordingly the main objectives of the EONI are:

**2.2.1 To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland.**

This objective is to prepare and maintain an accurate Electoral Register, through general canvass or the process of rolling registration, in accordance with the law and to publish the Register annually or otherwise as required by law. The Register will also be used to select a panel for jury service.

**2.2.2 To conduct Parliamentary, NI Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in Northern Ireland effectively and impartially and in accordance with the law.**

This objective is to ensure that elections and referendums in Northern Ireland are managed to the highest possible standard. Electors should be confident of an excellent and impartial electoral service, where electoral fraud has been eliminated. Independent surveys will be conducted in respect of the running of elections and the results of such surveys used as a measure of the public perception of how well elections have been managed. The EONI will also take note of recommendations from the Electoral Commission.

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2.3 The EONI has supplementary objectives which underpin achievement of its overall aim and main objectives and address the whole range of CEO's statutory responsibilities. The principal supplementary objectives are:

## **2.3.1 To design, publish and maintain an adequate polling station scheme.**

The polling station scheme is the plan covering the schools and halls throughout the community where polling stations are located. The EONI has to ensure that there are sufficient polling stations in the best possible locations to enable electors to cast their votes conveniently and without undue discomfort. This includes making every effort to accommodate elderly people or those with a disability. There are at present 612 polling places (locations) and 1532 polling stations (ballot boxes each with a Presiding Officer and at least one poll clerk). The scheme is revised formally every four years in accordance with legislative requirements and, in the interim, as necessary in response to representations and changing circumstances. The EONI published the report of an Equality Impact Assessment of the polling station scheme in 2004.

## **2.3.2 To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters.**

The CEO assists in the provision of advice on all electoral matters to the Secretary of State. This takes the form not only of input to briefings and discussions with the Secretary of State and his Ministers, but also the submission of written material putting forward the views of the EONI, for example, on proposed changes to electoral legislation and their practical implications. The CEO also consults/advises the Secretary of State about planned significant operational changes to the implementation of electoral law.

## **2.3.3 To provide advice to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.**

The CEO is required by law to act as an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. Although this may involve only one or two people on a direct basis, there is a need to

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provide data on electorate topography and advice to both Commissions on the re-drawing of boundaries.

2.4 The EONI's targets described in the 2006/07 Annual Plan flow from these main and supplementary objectives; performance indicators have been established to measure their achievement. The targets will be used to monitor and control the work of the EONI throughout 2006/07 and to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach throughout the Area Electoral Offices. From these targets will cascade the lower level objectives and targets to be represented in Project Plans and in turn the tasks to be performed by individual staff as defined in their Forward Job Plans and Personal Development Plans.

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## Measuring Performance

### 3

#### Performance Indicators

The EONI has established performance indicators to measure the achievement of its main and supplementary objectives.

Objective	Performance Indicators
To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completeness of the Register – having regard to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the relevant registration objectives as set out in law;</li> <li>b) progressive increase against the size of the last published Register; and,</li> <li>c) the population eligible to register.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Accuracy of the Register – having regard to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the relevant registration objectives as set out in law;</li> <li>b) personal identifiers; and,</li> <li>c) independent evidence and assessments.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Timeliness of publication and revision of the Register, having regard to the dates for publication and alteration of the Register as set out in law.</li> </ol>
To conduct Parliamentary, Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in Northern Ireland effectively and impartially and in accordance with the law.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completion of prescribed preliminaries to elections within the relevant statutory timetable.</li> <li>2. Extent of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provision of published polling arrangements;</li> <li>b) breakdown in arrangements; and</li> <li>c) electoral petitions.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Perceptions of effectiveness and impartiality, including the elimination of electoral fraud, derived from independent evidence and assessments.</li> </ol>
To design, publish and maintain a Polling Station Scheme.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Periodic publication within the prescribed timetable and arrangements for consultation.</li> <li>2. Extent of acceptance derived from:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) equality impact assessments;</li> <li>B) representations from the public and political parties;</li> <li>C) independent evidence and assessments.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timeliness of advice.</li> <li>2. View of the NIO on the quality and range of advice as assessed by feedback.</li> </ol>
To provide advice to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timeliness of advice.</li> <li>2. Views of Commissioners on quality and range of advice.</li> </ol>

## **Stakeholders**

### **4**

4.1 The EONI recognises that the delivery of effective electoral services is an essential contribution to democracy in Northern Ireland. While the EONI's obligations (on behalf of the CEO) are substantially defined in law, nevertheless it is important to have a clear understanding of who the various stakeholders are and the nature of their interest in electoral services, their expectations and how they are affected by the way electoral services are delivered.

4.2 The EONI views the main stakeholders in electoral services to be:

- The eligible electorate in Northern Ireland;
- MPs, MEPs, MLAs, District Councillors;
- Candidates for elections and their agents;
- Political Parties;
- The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Office, the UK Government and the NI Assembly;
- The Electoral Commission;
- Representative groups of the disabled, elderly and ethnic minorities;
- The permanent and temporary staff of the EONI.

4.3 The EONI seeks to design and implement the methods of delivering electoral services to take account, within the law and the resources available to it, of the requirements and needs of all these stakeholders.

## **Values and Standards**

### **5**

The work of the EONI is underpinned by a number of core values and standards for performance which pertain to all its activities and can be observed throughout the organisation at all levels.

The EONI is committed to providing the best electoral services possible within the resources available to it.

The EONI is fully committed to equal and fair treatment for

- all its staff,
- all those to whom it delivers services,
- all having contact with it.

The EONI's senior management team will provide strong and coherent leadership to the organisation, consult regularly with staff and allow suitable pathways for communication.

The EONI expects that all its staff will undertake their duties professionally.

The EONI requires all its staff to demonstrate constant commitment to a high level of public service. The EONI views the needs of its customers as paramount within the law and will respond effectively to their comments and complaints.

The EONI expects all its staff to maintain a high standard of ethical behaviour at all times and in all dealings, in accordance with the seven principles of public life.

The EONI is fully committed to the welfare of its staff and will support and encourage them to develop and realise their full potential.

The EONI will at all times seek to work harmoniously with other organisations.

## **Strategic Issues**

### **6**

#### **6.1 Registration**

6.1.1 The Government introduced the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill to Parliament on 16 February 2006. This legislation will, if passed, change the way in which the Electoral Register is compiled and maintained in Northern Ireland. In broad terms it will discontinue the annual canvass of electors and implement a less frequent enumeration combined with targeted updating. It is expected that the new measures, which were developed in conjunction with the CEO, will take effect from the beginning of 2007. Therefore, the canvass in 2006 will be the last annual canvass.

6.1.2 Under existing arrangements the Electoral Register is renewed completely every year. Normally the new Register is published on 1 December following a comprehensive autumn canvass of electors. Monthly amendments to the Register are made between December and August through a process of rolling registration which allows people to be added who failed to respond to the earlier canvass, who are newly eligible to register, who have moved house and wish to be registered at their new address or who have changed their name. It also allows for those who have died to be removed. At present there is no means available to the Electoral Office between canvasses to identify people who have left Northern Ireland and are no longer eligible to remain on the Register.

6.1.3 Notwithstanding the considerable effort and resources devoted to the canvass and rolling registration, there is evidence that the Register is falling and is in long term decline. The main reasons for this are believed to be increasing disinterest in politics and the 'switch off' factor to any form of regular survey, including the annual canvass, which leads inevitably to diminishing responses. The annual canvass is also expensive. The cost in 2006 will be approximately £1.5M.

6.1.4 It is imperative, of course, that the Register is at all times accurate. Confidence about the accuracy and integrity of the Register in Northern Ireland was raised

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significantly as a consequence of the measures implemented by the Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act 2002. To ensure the continuing accuracy of the Register and to increase its completeness, it is proposed to enhance the CEO's powers to access certain data maintained by other organisations. Such data will identify where electors are resident, residential property where no electors are registered, registered electors who have left Northern Ireland and are no longer eligible to be included on the Register and young people as they reach the age to be included. The EONI will use this data to make contact with existing electors and potential eligible electors. The statutory requirements for registration will remain unchanged. The accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register will be tested by statistical sampling from time to time and the CEO will advise the Secretary of State as to the accuracy and completeness of the Register in his annual report. The law will however provide for a regular full canvass every ten years, as a backstop to the new arrangements. In addition, a full canvass could be held in any year if the Secretary of State, having considered a recommendation made by the CEO in favour of a canvass being conducted in that year for the purpose of meeting the relevant registration objectives, is satisfied the public interest requires that a canvass should be conducted.

6.1.5 It is expected that these changes, if they are approved by Parliament, will have a very significant impact on the nature and size of the EONI's workload. The EONI and NIO have instituted a project, in which the Electoral Commission is also involved, to manage the transition to the new arrangements. A number of different project teams have been created to advise the project board about the design and implementation of the new processes needed for the receipt and use of the data disclosed by public authorities, periodic testing of the accuracy and completeness of the Register, staffing structures, the nature of the EONI estate, outreach programmes, ways of contacting eligible electors and publicity for the new arrangements. It will clearly take some time to implement and test the new arrangements and procedures and also to assess fully their consequences. However it is planned that outline policy decisions will be taken in all these areas by the end of 2006.

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## **6.2 Elections**

6.2.1 Some elections, such as those for District Councils, NI Assembly and the European Parliament, take place at times determined by legislation, while the dates of others can be announced with the minimum of statutorily required notice, e.g. Westminster Parliamentary elections or any by-election. Referendums can also be called at any time. It is a main objective of the EONI to conduct all elections effectively and thus the EONI seeks to commence its planning for each election within an adequate timeframe.

6.2.2 The EONI is currently basing its planning for elections on the following dates:

- |     |                                                                                         |                                    |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| i   | Northern Ireland Assembly Elections                                                     | May 2008                           |
| ii  | Local Government General Elections<br>on the basis of new a local government structure. | May or October 2008<br>or May 2009 |
| iii | Westminster Parliamentary General Election                                              | May/June 2009                      |
| iv  | European Parliamentary Election.                                                        | June 2009                          |

## **6.3 E- Voting and Counting**

6.3.1 The EONI is strongly convinced that if elections in Northern Ireland were to be conducted electronically increased effectiveness and economic advantage would result. However, the EONI is equally concerned to ensure that electronic systems should only be introduced when appropriate standards, fully guaranteeing the integrity and accuracy of election processes, have been developed and authorised by Government. This is especially the case for systems designed for complex proportional representation polls. Moreover, it is clear that any such systems could only be implemented when they were understood by and had widespread acceptance among the electorate and political representatives.

6.3.2 The EONI has been monitoring the various trials and implementations of electronic voting and counting in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. E-counting involving transferable votes was employed for the mayoral elections in London in 2004 and was trialled at two local government elections in England in May 2006. In May

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2007 it will be used again for the single transferable vote count at the Scottish local elections. The EONI continues to assess the results of these events as well as the wider commercial developments in the field with a view to determining the suitability of these methodologies to elections in Northern Ireland.

## **6.4 Quality of Service**

6.4.1 The EONI is committed to continuous improvement of its services and to utilising its resources as efficiently as possible. Systematic review of all aspects of electoral administration is integral to the senior management programme. Quality of service is a key aspect of staff training. The EONI's objectives for quality service improvement are reflected in the administrative targets for 2006/07. The EONI is pursuing accreditation on Charter Mark and Investors in People. The EONI gives full regard to external reports and analyses of electoral matters in Northern Ireland, in particular those commissioned and produced by the Electoral Commission. It will also take account of the performance standards for electoral administrators in Great Britain which are being developed currently by consultants on behalf of the Commission within a framework set out by the Department of Constitutional Affairs.

6.4.2 The EONI has a well publicised formal complaints procedure and gives prompt attention and a comprehensive response to all complaints and feedback on its services. Contact with the EONI can be made through the EONI web site at [www.electorlofficeni.gov.uk](http://www.electorlofficeni.gov.uk) and general email address [info@eoni.gov.uk](mailto:info@eoni.gov.uk). Improvements to the website to facilitate users with disabilities are planned for the summer of 2006. The arrangements for handling complaints will be reviewed annually.

## **6.5 The Electoral Commission**

6.5.1 The EONI continues to work closely with The Electoral Commission. Both share the objectives of comprehensive and accurate electoral registration and effective accessible modern electoral services. Senior staff in the EONI meet regularly with their counterparts in the Commission's Belfast office. The EONI also contributes extensively to the Commission's development work, including training materials and most recently performance indicators and occupational standards for electoral services. The EONI will

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continue to maintain good and practical working relationships with the Commission generally and its Belfast office in particular.

## **6.6 Corporate Governance and Financial Management**

6.6.1 The EONI is funded by the NIO from resources voted by Parliament. The CEO has a duty to account to the Accounting Officer of the NIO for the use of these funds. In this context the CEO will provide the Head of the NIO with an annual statement of assurance about the use of resources and the EONI's systems and controls. The EONI seeks to manage its affairs to the highest standards of stewardship and best practice and so as to ensure that the requirements of Parliament, Ministers and the NIO are met. It implements a number of strategies to ensure that all the resources made available to it are utilised effectively and efficiently and are accounted for fully and transparently. Risk analysis and risk management are integral to the EONI's planning procedures. Targets and controls are in place to ensure that the CEO's statutory functions duties and managerial responsibilities are fully achieved. The EONI and NIO will jointly review and, if necessary, renew during the summer of 2006 the documentation in place governing the relationship, with any changes agreed by August 2006.

### **6.6.2 Plans and Reports**

The EONI prepares and publishes Corporate and Annual Plans each year. The NIO has been consulted on this year's plans. The CEO reports annually under statute to the Secretary of State and such reports are laid before Parliament and published.

### **6.6.3 Internal Audit**

The EONI is subject to audit by the National Audit Office. In addition the EONI has commissioned an internal audit programme of annual reviews and reports aimed at progressive scrutiny of all its systems and controls. The reports are made available to the NIO. NIO internal audit recently carried out an audit of the departmental controls on EONI and made a number of recommendations which the NIO and the EONI will jointly ensure are implemented by autumn 2006.

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## **6.6.4 Information and Financial Accounting Systems**

The EONI is committed to continuous improvement of its information and financial management systems to ensure that the CEO, his senior management team and team leaders in area electoral offices and headquarters can make informed strategic and operational decisions based on up-to-date and accurate information. The EONI is currently installing a new electronic document and records management system with a view to improving the quality of and access to all business information by EONI staff. The EONI regularly reviews and refines its financial accounting systems.

## **6.6.5 Fraud**

The EONI actively and constantly promotes a culture of fraud prevention at all levels of the organisation. A revised fraud policy statement, reflecting modern best practice in the public and private sectors, will be prepared by August 2006.

## **6.7 Equality and Diversity**

6.7.1 The EONI will ensure that all staff, in every facet of their work, have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The EONI has in place an Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission, and in accordance with that Scheme the EONI has concluded a programme of Equality Impact Assessments. The Equality Scheme and the outcome of the EQIAs can be viewed on the EONI web site [www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk](http://www.electoralofficeni.gov.uk). All staff in the EONI undertake training to ensure that all aspects of their duties under the law and recommendations arising from the EQIAs are implemented. The EONI continues to review all its existing policies, powers, duties and functions and similarly consider all new areas.

## **6.8 Human Resources**

6.8.1 The greatest part of the EONI's administrative expenditure relates to pay. The staff, both full-time and part-time (up to 4500 at major elections), are one of the EONI's key strengths and must be supported and developed through good personnel management and training. They are the service deliverers and it is therefore vital that the EONI properly trains and motivates all its staff to provide a high level of service in the most

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cost effective manner. The EONI seeks to ensure that each individual contributes fully to the work of the EONI. It is also concerned to have in place adequate and suitable arrangements for personal development and career planning and to ensure that all its staff have equality of opportunity and fair treatment.

## **6.8.2 Management of Performance**

To encourage and support staff in setting and achieving challenging individual goals there needs to be a fair and objective framework by which the teams and individuals within EONI can be judged and rewarded. This will be achieved by:

- i Dissemination and cascading of objectives and targets so that annual Forward Job Plans and Personal Development Plans can be agreed accordingly for all staff.
- ii Continued development of the EONI management information system so that individuals have the information needed to manage and measure performance accurately.
- iii Continued operation of the system of half yearly staff reviews and mentoring to ensure that staff are enabled to contribute and develop to the best of their abilities.

## **6.8.3 Leadership**

Good leadership is essential at all levels to take staff successfully through whatever changes might lie ahead. Development of individual leadership styles will be a key element and this will be achieved by a comprehensive leadership programme.

## **6.8.4 Pay and Grading**

The EONI will continue to keep under review pay and grading arrangements to ensure that the most appropriate arrangements are in place in 2006-07 and beyond.

## **6.8.5 Staffing Levels and Absenteeism**

Staffing levels will be kept under review to ensure that EONI aims, objectives and targets are met as cost effectively as possible. Absenteeism will be monitored with a target of 4% or below.

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## **6.8.6 Communications**

The EONI is committed to promoting and maintaining good communication between staff at all levels. Staff will continue to be consulted on developments which involve or affect them. The established EONI/ trade union arrangements will be maintained. A staff opinion survey will be conducted each year among all full-time and a random 20% of part-time staff and the results used to inform the annual Human Resource Plan.

## **6.8.7 Health and Safety**

The EONI operates a programme of regular reviews of all health and safety issues as they affect staff and premises. Changes will be implemented in line with regulations, professional advice and best practice.

## **6.8.8 Training and Development**

All staff have a plan for personal development and training which is revised annually and which takes account of the skills required for their post. The EONI will review and amend as necessary all its instruction guides and operating manuals as the new arrangements for registration are designed and implemented and their impact understood.

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## Resources

### 7

7.1 Expenditure on elections is funded by HM Treasury through the Northern Ireland Office. Expenditure at any election is governed by the fees approved by Parliament for that election and all legitimate expenditure must be met within the limits set. The costs of registration work and the general expenditure incurred in maintaining the organisation and an office infrastructure capable of delivering electoral services is met from the Northern Ireland Office Estimate, approved annually by Parliament.

7.2 The projected budgets for 2006-2008 are set out below. Because the outcome of the next HMT spending review has to be awaited, it is not possible at this time to provide figures for 2008-09. A more detailed budget for 2006/07 is provided in the Annual Plan. Until Parliament has enacted new law the estimated expenditure for future years is based on the assumption that the EONI will be required to deliver electoral services in line with existing legislation.

	2006/07	2007/08
	£K	£K
Salaries & Pensions:		
Permanent staff	866	887
Temporary staff	228	234
Canvassers	512	525
ASLC transfers	<u>149</u>	<u>162</u>
	1755	1808
Administration Costs	1508	1295
Electoral Identity Card	110	114
Non cash	<u>227</u>	<u>227</u>
	3600	3444
Receipts	<u>130</u>	<u>130</u>
	<u>3470</u>	<u>3314</u>
Capital	600	377
<b><u>Costs of elections and referendums</u></b>		
District Council Elections <sup>1</sup>	-	-
NI Assembly Election	-	-
Parliamentary Election <sup>2</sup>	-	-
European Election	-	-
Referendums	-	-

<sup>1</sup> The costs of District Council elections are met by District Councils.

<sup>2</sup> In the event of combined District Council and Parliamentary elections the overall costs will be shared between the EONI and District Councils.

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## Key Targets for 2006/07

8

The EONI's key operational targets for 2006/07 are described below. These targets derive from both its main and secondary objectives and the performance indicators which are detailed in Section 3 above. In addition to these key targets the EONI also has set a number of administrative targets which are described in Section 11 below.

### KEY TARGETS

Objective	Performance Indicators	Targets
To prepare, publish and maintain an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive Electoral Register for Northern Ireland each year.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Completeness of the Register – having regard to:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) the relevant registration objectives as set out in law;</li><li>b) progressive increase against the size of the last published Register; and,</li><li>c) the population eligible to register.</li></ol></li><li>2. Accuracy of the Register – having regard to:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) the relevant registration objectives as set out in law;</li><li>b) personal identifiers; and,</li><li>c) independent evidence and assessments.</li></ol></li><li>3. Timeliness of publication and revision of the Register, having regard to the dates for publication and alteration of the Register as set out in law.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To compile a Register at 1 December 2006, with reference to 15 October 2006, which is not less complete in respect of eligible applicants than the Register at 1 September 2006.</li><li>2. To undertake checking of all national insurance numbers and dates of birth supplied by electors with Dept of Work and Pensions database by end March 2007.</li><li>3. To publish revisions of the Register at the first working day of each month, April 2006 to March 2007 (except for canvass period).</li><li>4. To undertake outreach programmes before, during and after the 2006 annual canvass aimed at bringing onto the Register people who persistently fail to register.</li></ol>

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## KEY TARGETS (continued)

Objective	Performance Indicators	Targets
Subject to approval by Parliament of new enabling legislation, to implement new arrangements for electoral registration including appropriate computer based Facilities.	Extent and timing of implementation.	<p>To design, procure and install computer based processes for the transfer and handling of data disclosed to the CEO by specified public authorities by March 2007, unless impacted by ongoing systems developments in some authorities.</p> <p>To conduct by March 2007 an initial or baseline statistical survey to assess the accuracy of the Register.</p>
It will not be feasible before the end of 2006/07 to assess fully and implement either the staffing requirements or office estate structure best suited to the new approach to registration, or to assess the impact the new arrangements may have on how elections are conducted.		
To conduct Parliamentary, NI Assembly, European and District Council elections and referendums in Northern Ireland effectively, impartially, within statutory timetables and to prevent electoral fraud.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completion of prescribed preliminaries to elections within the relevant statutory timetable.</li> <li>2. Extent of:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provision of published polling arrangements;</li> <li>b) breakdown in arrangements;</li> <li>c) electoral petitions.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Perceptions of effectiveness and impartiality, including the elimination of electoral fraud, derived from independent evidence and assessments.</li> </ol>	<p>No elections are timetabled for the period 2006/07.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. However, in respect of any election before 31 March 2007 to take all the preliminary statutory action required in accordance with the legislation and statutory timetables.</li> <li>2. In the event of any election or referendum held before 1 April 2007, to operate all the polling stations listed in the current polling station scheme during the whole of the prescribed duration of the election so that each polling station is manned during the whole period by a Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk and to provide appropriate absent voting facilities.</li> <li>3. Not less than 90% of people who voted at an election should view the election arrangements as effective and impartial.</li> </ol>

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## KEY TARGETS (continued)

Objective	Performance Indicators	Targets
To design, publish and maintain a polling station scheme.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Periodic publication within the prescribed timetable and arrangements for consultation.</li> <li>2. Extent of acceptance derived from:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) equality impact assessments;</li> <li>b) representations from the public and political parties;</li> <li>c) independent evidence and assessments.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To evaluate the polling station arrangements not later than 31 March 2007 and consult on and implement changes as appropriate.</li> <li>2. Not less than 90% of electors should view polling station arrangements as satisfactory.</li> </ol>
To provide advice to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on electoral matters.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timeliness of advice.</li> <li>2. View of the NIO on the quality and range of advice as assessed by feedback.</li> </ol>	Timeliness, quality and range of advice given rated as "good" by the NIO.
To provide advice to the Local Government Boundary Commission and the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timeliness of advice.</li> <li>2. Views of Commissioners on quality and range of advice.</li> </ol>	Timeliness, quality and range of advice given rated as "good" by the Commissioners.

## **2006/07 Administrative Budget**

### **9**

The detailed budget for 2006/07 analysed below relates to proposed expenditure in respect of;

- electoral registration during 2006/07, including the annual canvass in the autumn of 2006;<sup>1</sup>
- general administration: supporting proposed new procedures stemming from reform of electoral registration, rolling registration, wider electoral services and information systems;
- rental and upkeep of the EONI's office network incorporating seven locations;
- postage: this accrues mainly from the return of registration forms by freepost during the canvass;
- printing: mainly the production of canvass registration forms and registers;
- production and distribution of the electoral identity card and associated application and verification of identity arrangements;
- computer maintenance: in particular the EROS platform supporting the Electoral Register and associated database of personal identifiers, computer line rental;
- general stationery;
- staff training and development, external courses;
- staff travel;
- consultancy: including contracted out payroll;
- telecommunications: telephones charges;
- advertising: mainly recruitment of temporary staff for canvass work;
- capital expenditure: on the installation of IT facilities to deal with the new approach to registration and installation of EDRMS;
- receipts: the EONI receives contributions from district councils towards the costs of electoral registration and sale of the Electoral Register.

<sup>1</sup> Covers pay and pension costs

The administrative budget does not include any provision for the costs of conducting elections or referendums except that the salaries of permanent staff involved in planning and executing elections are met from this budget. No elections are expected during 2006/07.

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## EONI spending plan 2006/07

	£K	£K
Salaries & Pensions		
Permanent and fixed term staff	866	
Temporary administrative staff	228	
Canvassers	512	
ASLC	<u>149</u>	1755
EONI Office Estate		
Rents and Rates	340	
Maintenance	50	
Power	36	
Cleaning	17	
Estate Management	20	
Other	<u>38</u>	501
Computer Maintenance		216
Postage		313
Printing		170
Electoral Identity Card		110
Consultancy etc		16
Advertising		30
Travel		53
Training		31
Telecoms		25
Stationery		40
Statistical Survey		60
Other costs		53
Non Cash		227
		<u>3600</u>
Revenue Receipts		130
		<u>3470</u>
Capital Expenditure		600

## **Projects in 2006/07**

### **10**

10.1 This section details the most important activities to be undertaken by the EONI during 2006/07 in relation to delivery of the CEO's statutory functions, adherence to overarching administrative and employment law and standards, and good management and husbandry of public funds.

#### **Annual Canvass**

10.2 A new Register will be created on 1 December 2006. Persons who fail to complete a registration form during the autumn canvass period will not be included on the new Register. The canvass will be conducted in line with EONI practice in 2005. Pre-addressed registration forms and guidance notes will be posted out to all electors registered at 1 August 2006 and blank forms sent to dwellings where no one is registered. Approximately 1000 canvassers will visit every household and collect completed forms up to five weeks after the post out. They will also identify new properties not on the EONI database. Canvassers who fail to contact electors will leave a freepost envelope, blank forms and information about returning the form. Experience suggests that a significant proportion of all forms will be returned by freepost. Reminders will be sent to previously registered electors who have failed to return a form by 15 October 2006. Responses to the reminders are made by freepost.

10.3 Over 100 temporary office staff will also be recruited to deal with the forms returned. Information on the forms will be processed on the EONI computer database comprising the Register and the personal and supplementary data supporting it. The new Register will be published on 1 December 2006.

10.4 The Register is administered at area electoral office level. Each of these offices is responsible for that part of the Register relating to the two allocated Parliamentary

# ***ANNUAL PLAN 2006-2007***

constituencies. The offices will be responsible for management of the canvass in their area including recruitment and supervision of all temporary staff.

10.5 The costs of the canvass in 2006 are estimated as follows:

	<b>£K</b>	<b>£K</b>
Recruitment of canvassers and temporary staff		15
Permanent staff - salaries	289	
Temporary office staff - pay	192	
Canvassers - pay and travel	<u>544</u>	1025
Production of canvass forms, guidance notes, reminders, etc.		160
Post out of forms		180
Production and post out of reminders		55
Freepost return of canvass forms		50
General postage		<u>28</u>
TOTAL		<u>1513</u>

## **Rolling Registration**

10.6 Experience suggests that, in the absence of a carryover of electors from the previous register, the new Register published at 1 December will be smaller than that at 1 September 2006. It has been the regular pattern that, in the event of an election in the following year, any deficit is largely eliminated through rolling registration. Electors who failed to re-register during the canvass are encouraged and assisted by the political parties to apply through rolling registration, especially in the period immediately before an election. This has created very large workloads to be dealt with in short timeframes. In the past the initiative to seek rolling registration lay with the elector. Under the new arrangements, which will operate from the beginning of 2007, the EONI will be charged with actively seeking to bring all those eligible electors who failed to re-register during the canvass back on to the Register. This is without regard as to whether or not there will be an election in 2007. Consequently, the EONI expects to have to undertake a large programme of rolling registration in the immediate aftermath of the 2006 canvass.

## **New registration procedures**

10.7 The new approach to registration will require the EONI to keep the Register accurate and progressively more complete without an annual canvass. Therefore, from

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the beginning of 2007 the EONI will begin to implement new procedures to identify and contact those eligible electors who appear to be registered inaccurately, as well as those who are not registered. It will be crucial to the success of the new approach that the EONI finds effective ways of tracking where existing and potential electors reside. The CEO will have legal access to relevant data held by a number of public authorities which will be specified in Regulations. The first stage in developing this new approach to registration will be to procure a computer based system which will be capable of transferring the various data to the EONI and comparing it with the registration details held by the EONI. This analysis will provide the EONI with indicative evidence of inaccuracies or gaps in the Register and allow it to make enquiries about whether the Register should be amended. It is proposed that the computer system should be designed and procured by the end of 2006 and tested and fully implemented by March 2007. The EONI will recruit consultants with the required design and programming skills.

## **Elections**

10.8 In light of recent political developments and legislation on the dates of NI Assembly elections, the EONI is not planning for an Assembly election in 2007.

## **Electoral Identity Card**

10.9 It is expected that the majority of applications for the electoral identity card will continue to be made by post. The EONI has estimated that up to ten thousand cards could be applied for during 2006/07. Applicants who apply by post have to provide their own photograph. During 2006/07 the EONI will continue to maintain permanent application sites at each area electoral office where the application process is entirely free. The EONI has contracted out all of the production work related to the card but deals directly with queries.

## **Electronic Document and Records Management System**

10.11 The EONI has procured and is installing an Electronic Document and Records Management System. The initial cost of this project will be around £65K and the annual maintenance cost £8K. The project is expected to be completed later this year.

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## **Investors in People and Charter Mark**

10.12 The EONI will take forward projects in 2006/07 working towards achieving Charter Mark accreditation for its management and service delivery systems and the IiP standard for training and staff development. It is not intended that these objectives will be achieved by the end of the year.

## **Internal Audit**

The second phase of the EONI's current three year programme of internal audit will be completed before the end of March 2007. The annual cost of the internal review is approximately £5K.

## Administrative Targets for 2006/07

11

<b>Financial management</b>	
1.	To operate with improved efficiency within the budget for administrative costs allocated by the NIO (£3.6M)
2.	To implement recommendations from external and internal audit for improvements in financial control by autumn 2006.
<b>Quality of Service</b>	
1.	To develop, install and test by March 2007 a business continuity plan to cater for serious loss of essential staff and/or facilities.
2.	To design and implement improvements to the EONI website with particular focus on making information more accessible to people with disabilities.
3.	To maintain the EONI established standards for dealing with complaints, responding to requests for information and advice.
4.	To provide standard forms in Braille and large type on request and in languages other than English, where reasonably required.
<b>Human Resources</b>	
1.	To produce a training needs analysis and complementary training plan for the EONI for 2006/07
2.	To ensure that every member of staff is afforded the opportunities to meet the targets set in their personal development plan.
3.	To ensure that the performance of all staff is assessed and reported in accordance with approved standards and prescribed timetables.
4.	To review and revise as necessary the EONI's human resources policies to ensure that all its obligations with regard to the recruitment, employment and management of staff are addressed fully, are understood and implemented throughout the organisation, and are endorsed by the Trade Unions.
<b>Internal Communications</b>	
1.	Taking account of the results of the staff survey conducted in December 2005 to develop a comprehensive communications strategy leading to improved information pathway between the senior management team and the whole body of staff by March 2007.
2.	To develop an intranet facility for the EONI by the end of 2006.
3.	To provide a basis for measuring and recording the effectiveness and efficiency of the IP telephony system introduced in 2005.

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<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	
1.	To produce, by end March 2007, plans whereby voters with disabilities can gain appropriate and satisfactory access to polling stations and area electoral offices.
2.	To publish the EONI's Annual Equality Report by autumn 2006.
3.	To complete, by the end of 2006, an assessment, as agreed with the Equality Commission, of the impact on both its staff and its customers of information and communications technology in the EONI.
<b>Computer Systems</b>	
1.	In light of the new approach to registration, to review by the end of March 2007, the computer database supporting the Register and associated electors' details and how it is presently used, with a view to ensuring that the system will contribute as effectively and efficiently as possible to the new arrangements.
2.	To establish and test by the end of February 2007 a disaster recovery plan for the EONI's registration and elections computer system.
<b>Reporting</b>	
1.	To produce performance assessment reports for all EONI staff in line with prescribed procedures and timetables.
2.	To agree with the NIO a Management Statement for the EONI and to establish reporting and review procedures of EONI performance in accordance with the Management Statement.
<b>External Communications</b>	
1.	To maintain and build on the EONI's existing network of contacts with outside organisations and representative groups and establish new contacts as required.
2.	To examine ways to extend and enhance contact and relations with the news and public information media.

**ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**  
From 1 June 2006

**Chief Electoral Officer**  
**Douglas Bain**

**Assistant Chief Electoral Officer**  
**June Butler**

**Operations Manager**  
**Jocelyn McCarley**

**Head of Information Services**  
**Liz Murray**

**Head of Corporate Services**  
**Margaret McMullen**

**Head of Area Office Services**  
**Andrew Minnis**

**Information Officer**  
Claire McGrattan

**IT Support Officer**  
Marcus Somerville

**Human Resources Officer**  
Lisa Cherry

**Finance Officer**  
Peter Mullan

<i>Londonderry Area Electoral Officer</i> Patricia Murphy	<i>Ballymena Area Electoral Officer</i> Rae Kirk	<i>Banbridge A Area Electoral Officer</i> Amanda Mason	<i>Banbridge B Area Electoral Officer</i> Majella Morgan	<i>Omagh Area Electoral Officer</i> Martin Fox	<i>Newtownabbey Area Electoral Officer</i> Sharon Allen	<i>Belfast A Area Electoral Officer</i> Maureen Carroll	<i>Belfast B Area Electoral Officer</i> Alison Allen	<i>Newtownards Area Electoral Officer</i> Jeanette Murray
Foyle East Londonderry	North Antrim Mid Ulster	Upper Bann Newry & Armagh	Lagan Valley South Down	West Tyrone Fermanagh & South Tyrone	East Antrim South Antrim	North Belfast West Belfast	South Belfast East Belfast	Strangford North Down