



Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

Business Plan

April 2025 – March 2026

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Business Plan for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. The publication of this plan marks the move of the Electoral Office from St Annes House Belfast to new premises in Colby House Belfast on 1 July 2025.

This plan sets out an ambitious and forward-looking agenda that reflects our continued commitment to delivering high-quality electoral services for the people of Northern Ireland. Over the coming year, we will focus on four strategic objectives that aim to strengthen the foundations of our electoral system while embracing opportunities to modernise and innovate.

Our strategic objectives:

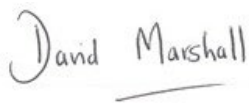
1. Maintain and enhance the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register.
2. Deliver well-run electoral events.
3. Modernise electoral services.
4. Build a resilient organisation.

These strategic objectives represent our determination to improve and future-proof electoral services, particularly as we prepare for two single transferrable vote elections (Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Government) both set out in legislation to run on the same day - Thursday 6 May 2027. Electoral services are a vital part of our democracy, and this plan underscores the importance of investing in their continued development and resilience.

However, the delivery of our duties, while at the same time improving electoral services and preparing for combined elections in 2027, will be challenging within the budget and resources available to the Electoral Office. It is important

that some initial budget for 2027 elections work, including detailed planning and service enhancement is made available shortly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the temporary and permanent staff of the Electoral Office for their ongoing dedication and professionalism. Their efforts have ensured the successful delivery of elections under increasing demands and resource pressures. I look forward to working with them and all stakeholders as we take forward the improvements outlined in this plan.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "David Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Dr David Marshall

Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland acts to support the Chief Electoral Officer in carrying out their duties. The main duties of the Chief Electoral Officer include:

- maintaining the Electoral Register and working to ensure the Electoral Register is as accurate and complete as possible
- running all official elections and referendums within Northern Ireland
- making recommendations to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the development of policy in relation to electoral law in Northern Ireland
- implementing any changes coming from Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions
- maintaining public confidence in electoral services and working to ensure delivery is free from political interference.

Strategic Objective 1: Maintain and enhance the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register

Business Objectives:

Enhance the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral register by encouraging at least 50,000 people to apply to register to vote online through ongoing registration and targeted registration interventions between April 2025-March 2026.

Enhance the accuracy of the electoral register by using high-quality data to regularly remove inaccurate entries and review registration data.

Ensure 99% of applications to register to vote are processed within 5 working days.

Enhance the 'Am I registered' service through user-focused improvements and awareness raising between April 2025 and March 2026.

Effectively implement the new canvass processes set out in the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 by issuing household notices to retained electors by December 2025, encouraging them to register to vote.

Develop and publish proposals outlining options for a reformed canvass model that enhances the accuracy and completeness of the Electoral Register by March 2026.

Strategic Objective 2: Deliver well-run electoral events

Business Objectives:

Maintain readiness for unscheduled electoral events through regular reviews of contingency plans.

Embed the online Electoral Identification Card application service by September 2025.

Advanced planning and co-ordination in preparation for combined 2027 Northern Ireland Assembly and Local Council elections by March 2026.

Review postal voting processes to identify opportunities for streamlining the service and improving the voter experience by March 2026.

Review election staffing models to identify opportunities for operational efficiency by March 2026.

Strategic Objective 3: Modernise electoral services

Business Objectives:

Test and refine new enhanced Single Transferable vote calculation software system by March 2026.

Improve and enhance our electoral registration management system by March 2026.

Identify relevant data sources to support the planned introduction of votes at 16 and other electoral reforms proposed by the UK Government.

Develop a strategy to modernise EONI's digital infrastructure by March 2026.

Objective 4: Build a resilient organisation

Business Objectives:

Strengthen alignment of organisational resources to strategic priorities by delivering targeted training, recruiting skilled staff, and developing workforce capabilities to support the effective delivery of electoral services.

Strengthen corporate governance by enhancing risk management frameworks, improving strategic planning and project management practices.

Complete office relocation to Colby House and implement new ways of working that support collaborative working by September 2025.

Develop and implement an internal and external communication strategy that fosters transparency, builds trust, and strengthens engagement by March 2026.

Maintain internal controls across finance, procurement, and HR by conducting regular compliance checks and reporting throughout the year.

Maintain security of Electoral Office data assets by regular monitoring and reporting on safety measures.

Ensure 95% of public enquiries are responded to within target timeframe.

Submission of 2024/25 annual reports to Secretary of State by September 2025.

Expenditure

The annual resource budget allocation from the United Kingdom Government for 2025/26 for the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland is £2.305m.

The expected expenditure is broken down in the table below

Broad Area	Amount
Permanent Staff	£1.34m
Buildings – Rent, Rates, Utilities (including moving costs to Colby House)	£0.26m
IT, Legal, Finance, Audit & other Electoral Corporate Services	£0.685m
Other Services e.g. Postage, Printing, Equipment Maintenance	£0.2m
Income (including sales of Electoral Register)	-£0.18m

There is a separate annual capital budget of £100k in 2025/26.

The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
Belfast
BT9 5TA (*from 1 July 2025*)

Website: www.eoni.org.uk

Email: info@eoni.org.uk

Phone: 028 9044 6680

Twitter/X: [@eoni_official](https://twitter.com/eoni_official)

Register to vote: gov.uk/register-to-vote

