

VotingMatters

YOUR OFFICIAL **OPT2VOTE** NEWSLETTER

OPT2VOTE
choices to suit you 

ISSUE 05 / MAY 2008

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»» OPT2VOTE TRAINING COURSES

A series of very successful training courses was held throughout the UK from January 2008 to the weeks leading up to the May 2008 election. The courses offered a dedicated training service for PVMS and PIMS products, with a strong emphasis on practical exercises. This practical format of the courses led to excellent feedback such as:

Stephen Cooke Electoral/Members' Services Manager at Mid Bedfordshire District Council commented; 'On leaving the course at the end of the day I felt justified in paying for what turned out to be a very well organised and highly valuable session. Whilst we did get our system to work for the postal vote statements in 2007, I never felt confident about what was happening. After yesterday's course I can now say that I look forward to postal vote issues and returns being once again a routine matter when we have our next elections.'

Nick Tringham, Birmingham City Council agreed that he would recommend the course, 'For anyone who is working with postal votes and the OPT2VOTE system this course is essential.'



Participants of the OPT2VOTE training course in Darlington.

»» NEW APPOINTMENT AT OPT2VOTE

OPT2VOTE would like to welcome Frank Sibbald on board. Frank joins OPT2VOTE as part of the sales team, focusing specifically on the Scottish territory. We wish Frank every success in his future role.



Welcome to VotingMatters

Welcome to the summer edition of Voting Matters, OPT2VOTE's customer newsletter!

In this edition, Voting Matters reports on the successful delivery of this year's election. We also include details of OPT2VOTE's enhanced Registration product and information on the next Advisory Group meeting.

We hope you benefit from learning more about OPT2VOTE and gain a better understanding of how the company can help with next years European elections. If there is anything you would like to see featured in forthcoming issues please email Claire at votingmatters@opt2vote.com

»» REVIEW OF MAY 08 ELECTION BY MARK GILLEN, OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

OPT2VOTE is proud of the overall performance and delivery of its products and services during the May 2008 election. The success achieved this year has largely been down to our dedicated staff who have worked alongside our partners and the Advisory Group to improve the product set.

The outcome is very positive with the successful launch of EasyPrint and deployment of an enhanced Postal Vote Management Solution (PVMS). The feedback on this year's delivery speaks for itself:

Paula Bayes, Electoral Services Manager from Sandwell commented on the print and PVMS services,

"This year OPT2VOTE gave a first class service with every aspect of the products they provided, from the proofing of the postal voting documents to the supply of the ballot papers all arriving before the scheduled dates and the fully managed system for checking the postal voting identifiers. OPT2VOTE has improved the service considerably, all the hard work put into working with their customers has paid off"

Focusing specifically on print, OPT2VOTE has been working alongside its print partners since May last year to produce a refined print product set. This has resulted in improved products of a superior quality which have been received very well by our customer base. The launch of EasyPrint this year has significantly improved the overall process around print. The facility to upload, proof and sign off online has provided added value by enhancing customer engagement and providing full traceability. The introduction of a print 'Open Day' which was held at GI Solutions in January has also proved to be very positive, giving Local Authorities the chance to visit the print site and gain a better understanding of the print process. This is something we will be arranging again over the coming months and we would be delighted to give Local Authorities the opportunity to see the advancements we have made through print site visits.

Colin Iveson, Head of Democratic Services at Craven District Council reinforced the positive impact of the work carried out on print by commenting,

"I'm really very grateful to OPT2VOTE for the postal vote ballot pack you supplied this year. The product is a great improvement on last year and I'm sure that is down to OPT2VOTE's preparedness to learn through listening to its customers. In particular, OPT2VOTE's initiative, in setting up the customer liaison group with a view to improving the products and service you offer has played a key part in that process. I have no doubt that our postal voters found it easier to deal with the return of the pack. This is exemplified by the fact that we had fewer enquiries on the helpline and, more importantly, the number of postal votes rejected at opening because they were incorrectly completed was greatly reduced. I look forward to working with OPT2VOTE in the future to make the product even better."

OPT2VOTE plans to build upon the successful delivery of May 2008 and we are now working towards the European elections next year with sustained input from both partners and customers. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their continued support over the past year and look forward to working alongside you in the future.

▶▶ OPT2VOTE'S 2008 REGISTRATION PRODUCT WITH DATA SECURITY A MAJOR FEATURE

OPT2VOTE's fully automated registration system has been redeveloped by working closely with Local Authority partners to bring it into line with our e-voting technology which was used so successfully at recent electoral modernisation pilots in the UK. It provides ease of use for the elector whilst reducing the manual administration tasks associated with the Annual Canvass.

The Internet and telephone component of the Registration product is designed with data security as the core concept. As an ISO 27001 accredited organisation, **OPT2VOTE** understands the importance of security, accuracy and protection of electoral data and electoral systems. The enhanced product ensures a user friendly, simple to use registration channel for all users.

Internet Registration

- ✗ Fully encrypted file transfer at all stages to and from Council
- ✗ Highly resilient system, built upon industry leading security standards
- ✗ Proactive system alerting ensuring high availability of service at all times
- ✗ Data downloads from Council Admin site – unlimited – any time
- ✗ Council customisation
- ✗ Multi-lingual offering

Telephone Registration

- ✗ Local and free phone numbers
- ✗ Scalability to handle 1000's of calls simultaneously
- ✗ Highly resilient infrastructure across multiple sites ensuring service availability
- ✗ Multi-lingual offering
- ✗ Registration Progress reports

OPT2VOTE's enhanced Registration product portfolio provides electors with a choice of channels that can be accessed easily, quickly and securely whilst saving the Local Authority time and money.

For a demonstration or further information please do hesitate to call or email
Conor McColgan Tel: 028 7137 1111 Email: cmccolgan@opt2vote.com

▶▶ ADVISORY GROUP HERE TO STAY

OPT2VOTE's Advisory Group has been in place since June 2007 and has proved instrumental in understanding our customers' needs and aligning products not only to meet these needs but also to provide added value across all products and services. Due to its success over the last year **OPT2VOTE** plans to continue the Advisory Group and to encourage new customers to come along and give their feedback.

The next Advisory Group meeting will be held on 4th June at the Ettington Park Hotel, Stratford Upon Avon. Should you wish to be involved please email Claire (cneill@opt2vote.com)



Participants of December 07 Advisory Group.

▶▶ DEPLOYMENT OF POSTAL VOTE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION (PVMS)

PVMS was successfully rolled out to the customer base for the May 2008 election. This included deployment to Local Authorities who use different EMS suppliers and to sites ranging from 15,000 postal voters up to 75,000 postal voters. The enhanced product was well received with John Tomlinson, Electoral Services Manager of Sheffield City Council commenting:

*"Both Sheffield City Council and **OPT2VOTE** had implemented changes to their systems as a result of lessons learned in 2007. **OPT2VOTE's** assigned project manager worked well with the Returning Officer and the team. The refinements together with the team working approach led to the sessions running to time and everybody's stress levels were kept well within manageable limits."*

'PVMS Remote'

PVMS was deployed in Birmingham for the fourth consecutive year to help manage the large electorate which is spread over 40 wards. This year in addition to the standard PVMS service, Birmingham City Council also used 'PVMS Remote'. This enabled the Council to use PVMS not only for the central scanning location on count night but also to scan postal

votes at a number of remote sites as well. PVMS Remote was used in eighteen different count centre locations in addition to the central location in Ladywood, with up to four wards being processed at each location. This enabled 100% checking of all postal packs returned at polling stations on count night. The packs were scanned and authenticated using the software at the eighteen remote sites each of which was linked to the central system.

Cheryl Mulvihill, Electoral Services Manager at Birmingham City Council commented,

*"I have enjoyed working with **OPT2VOTE** throughout the year, culminating in a successful Election. Together, working through the User Group and continual reviews direct with **OPT2VOTE**, we planned, tried and tested all elements of the Postal Vote process. These included new innovations and developments to take the management service out to 18 remote count centres, the EasyPrint system of loading, proofing and sign off and also setting up the FTP method of transferring and checking of images at regular intervals."*

***OPT2VOTE** had continual dialogue with all our suppliers, ensuring good integration between*

*Halarose, our EMS, our Printer and IT service. The Remote Count Centres worked very well, and we will continue to use them. **OPT2VOTE** supplied the necessary training, and all staff coped with the stand alone scanners and PC's. We look forward to developing and improving throughout next year, and have confidence that **OPT2VOTE** are able to provide the high level of service and accuracy required by an authority of this size and standing."*

OPT2VOTE is committed to building on the success of this delivery in the future. We are already booked to 50% capacity for the 2009 European elections. PVMS Remote is of particular value for the European elections as it provides the facility to scan and check Personal Identifiers across Local Authority boundaries. PVMS remote can be moved to the checking location of the neighboring Local Authority.

If you are interested in further information or a demonstration of PVMS please contact Conor McColgan on 028 7137 1111 or email cmccolgan@opt2vote.com