



City of Belmont

Tabled Attachments

Special Council Meeting

Held

18 October 2021

Creating opportunities





Special Council Meeting 18/10/21

Item 3 refers

Tabled Attachment 1

Returning Officer Election Report

Creating opportunities





Returning Officer Election Report

Returning Officer	Diane Gearon
Local government	City of Belmont

Nominations

In July of 2021 I was pleased to learn I was again appointed by the Electoral Commissioner to the position of Returning Officer for the City of Belmont for the Ordinary Election to be held on 16 October 2021.

As Returning Officer, I attended the WAEC co-hosted Candidate Information Session for prospective candidates, the session was well attended by prospective candidates from Belmont, Bassendean, Bayswater & Swan, a handful of attendees contacted me at the session to obtain further information.

Nominations opened on 2 September and closed on 9 September. 12 enquiries from prospective candidates were made in advance with meetings scheduled for each of these nominations. A change to the number of words in a profile to a character count of 180 characters reduced the use of hyphenated words in profiles, it also made for more concise profiles. The content of all profiles was of an excellent standard, nomination meetings ranged for 45 minutes to 1 hours to complete the nomination process.

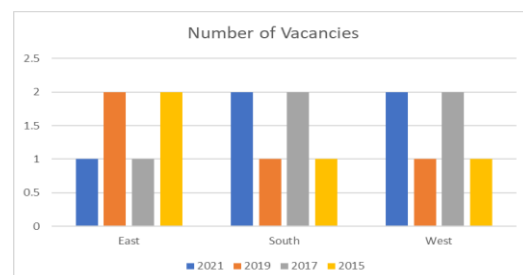
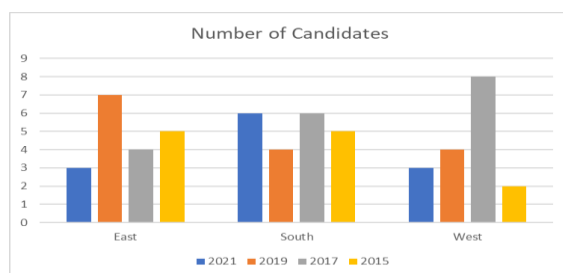
The receipt of nominations was as follows:

Date	Number received
Thurs 2/9/21	2
Sat 4/9/21	1
Mon 6/9/21	1
Tues 7/9/21	1
Wed 8/9/21	3
Thurs 9/9/21	4
Total	12

Candidates were each provided with a USB drive containing the Electoral Roll and Owners & Occupiers Roll. Two candidates were provided the Owners & Occupiers roll via email on 6 September.

All nominations were placed on the City of Belmont web page as well on the notice board at the Council Administration Building.

The comparison of nominations over the past 4 elections is below:





Returning Officer Election Report

Close of nominations and draw for position on the ballot paper

At the close of nominations at 4.00pm on 9 September, 3 valid nominations had been received for the 1 vacancy in the East Ward, 6 nominations for the 2 vacancies in the South Ward and 3 nominations were received for the 2 vacancies in the West.

After the draw for ballot paper positions held at approximately 4.30pm that afternoon, in the Council Chambers, the following ballot paper orders were decided:

East Ward
SMITH, Damien
RYAN, Bernie
HERBERT, Alana

South Ward
CARTER, Natalie
NEWTON-FAAS, Elizabeth
BARKER, Vaughn
POWELL, Janet
KULCZYCKI, Christopher
DAVIS, Jenny

West Ward
SESSIONS, Deborah
HOLT, Sharren
SEKULLA, George

Communications with the Candidates was primarily by email with the following main contacts made:

- Returning Officer 9/9/21 – outcome of the draw of positions on the ballot paper.
- City of Belmont 15/9/21 - Information was provided by the City in respect to, declaration of gift requirements, signage local laws and the code of conduct.
- Returning Officer 22/9/21 – notice that ballot papers for the City of Belmont have not been lodged yet with Australia Post.
- Returning Officer 22/9/21 – General Information: Advertising and Social Media Authorisation.
- Returning Officer 23/9/21 – notice that ballot papers for the City of Belmont had been lodged that evening with Australia Post.
- Returning Officer 28/9/21 – General Information: Election package return statistics.
- Returning Officer 12/10/21 – General information: The Count and Scrutineer forms.



Returning Officer Election Report

Receipt of election packages to local Government offices

A number City of Belmont staff members were trained on the receipt and processing of election packages on the 24 September (prior to electors receiving their postal votes).

The replacement of votes and a ballot box was provided at 1 location within the City, being the Administration Building, this was also the base for election day and the count.

The transfer of election packages from the City of Belmont to the WAEC processing centre occurred on 1 occasion (14 October 2021).

Statistics for the voting activity at the Administration Building for the past 2 elections is as follows:

City of Belmont vote processing	2017	2019	2021
Replacement votes prior to election day	23	30	40
Replacement votes election day	17	28	32
Processed on Election Day (replacements & drop-offs)	188	171	222

Count - operations

The Ballot papers from the processing centre arriving at the City of Belmont at 1.00pm on 16 October.

The count took place in the upstairs function room at the City of Belmont Administration Centre, the count room was divided into three wards (East, South & West). All wards were manual counts undertaken by between 2 and 5 staff plus a table supervisor.

12 Scrutineers were appointed to observe the count. A briefing was given at the commencement of the Count to enable the Scrutineers and Public Gallery to be aware of the proceedings. The Public Gallery was very full throughout the evening up until 9pm. The count location was ideal as opposed to the council chamber used in 2019 which was difficult to move around.

The Count commenced at approx. 6.20pm, following the processing of the final ballot papers handed in at the City of Belmont Office. By 7.20pm a ½ way progress tally was displayed for each ward. The count was completed at approximately 7.50pm, however I asked all table supervisors to undertake an informal re-count of all ballot papers to give certainty to the ballot paper numbers against the reconciliation sheets, this was undertaken in an efficient manner and concluded at 8.16pm for all wards. Confirmation from the WAEC to declare the results was timelier than 2019, and results were declared as follows: 8.35pm East Ward, 8.40 West Ward, 8.50 South Ward.

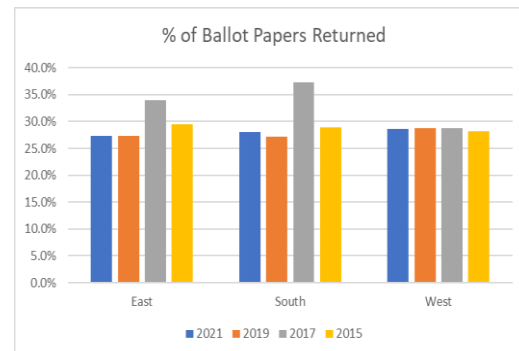
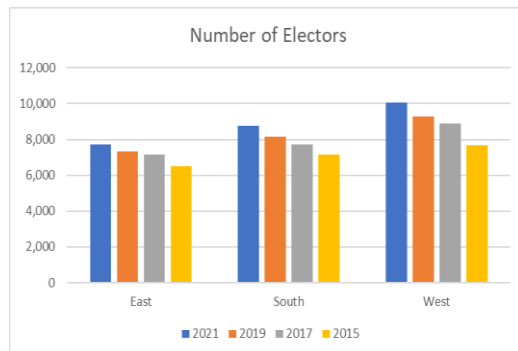
The checking of informal votes was extremely efficient with only 2 ballot papers, determined as informal, being different to how the scrutineer viewed the formality. The informal comparison from the last 3 election is shown below:



Returning Officer Election Report

Ward	2017	2019	2021
East	23	14	15
South	9	17	11
West	17	25	13
TOTAL	49	56	39

The elector turnout statistics over the past 4 elections is shown below, whilst the number of electors has grown the turn-out rate has remained steady:



Staffing for the count (numbers and performance)

Training took place during the election as follows:

- Election training – from WAEC to Returning Officer, Sunday 22 August;
- Replacement Votes – from Returning Officer to City of Belmont staff, Friday 24 September;
- Count Staff – from Returning Officer to City of Belmont Staff, Friday 15 October.

A number of count staff had previously worked at the 2019 Local Government Election. The table supervisors on all wards were excellent and managed their teams and the processes exceptionally well.

The staff on count night were as follows:

Location	Number
East Ward	3
South Ward	6
West Ward	4
Scrutineer monitor, results monitor & governance	3
TOTAL	16

Checking Results with WAEC and Declaration of the poll

The conduct of the count was planned in a phased approach and worked well. From a scrutineer and public perspective, it may not have been obvious that an informal re-count was performed on all wards to verify our results prior to declaration.



Returning Officer Election Report

The order of proceedings was:

1. Sort of ballot papers (informal, 1 vote and 2 votes where relevant (West and South Wards));
2. Allocation of ballot papers to count cards;
3. Counting of votes on count cards;
4. Supervisor check of bundles;
5. Review of Informal Ballot Papers by Returning Officer;
6. Check and re-count of all bundles;
7. Lodge votes in Election Management System (EMSWA) and submit to WAEC;
8. Notification from WAEC to proceed to declaration;
9. Result declared.

The result summary as published on the WAEC website is shown below:

EAST WARD	
Vacancies	(1) Councillor
Expiry of term	18 October 2025
Total electors	7,721
Turnout rate	27.38%
Formal ballot papers	2,099
Informal ballot papers	15

Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Expiry of Term
SMITH, Damien	717	34.16%	
RYAN, Bernie	785	37.40%	18 October 2025
HERBERT, Alana	597	28.44%	
Total valid votes	2,099	100%	

[View candidate profiles](#)

SOUTH WARD	
Vacancies	(2) Councillors
Expiry of term	18 October 2025
Total electors	8,764
Turnout rate	28.01%
Formal ballot papers	2,444
Informal ballot papers	11



Returning Officer Election Report

SOUTH WARD	
Vacancies	(2) Councillors
Expiry of term	18 October 2025
Total electors	8,764
Turnout rate	28.01%
Formal ballot papers	2,444
Informal ballot papers	11

Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Expiry of Term
CARTER, Natalie	1,052	23.18%	18 October 2025
NEWTON-FAAS, Elizabeth	398	8.77%	
BARKER, Vaughn	388	8.55%	
POWELL, Janet	1,042	22.96%	
KULCZYCKI, Christopher	394	8.68%	
DAVIS, Jenny	1,264	27.85%	18 October 2025
Total valid votes	4,538	100%	

WEST WARD	
Vacancies	(2) Councillors
Expiry of term	18 October 2025
Total electors	10,047
Turnout rate	28.65%
Formal ballot papers	2,865
Informal ballot papers	13

Candidates	Votes	Percentage	Expiry of Term
SESSIONS, Deborah	1,794	38.88%	18 October 2025
HOLT, Sharren	1,245	26.98%	
SEKULLA, George	1,575	34.14%	18 October 2025
Total valid votes	4,614	100%	

The results indicate that all candidates have received sufficient votes for their nomination depositions to be refunded.

Working relationship with Local Government staff

The City of Belmont Staff were extremely welcoming and supportive throughout the Election period. The key staff were helpful, knowledgeable, and experienced, I wish to particularly acknowledge some key staff who were instrumental in ensuring the election process was smooth:



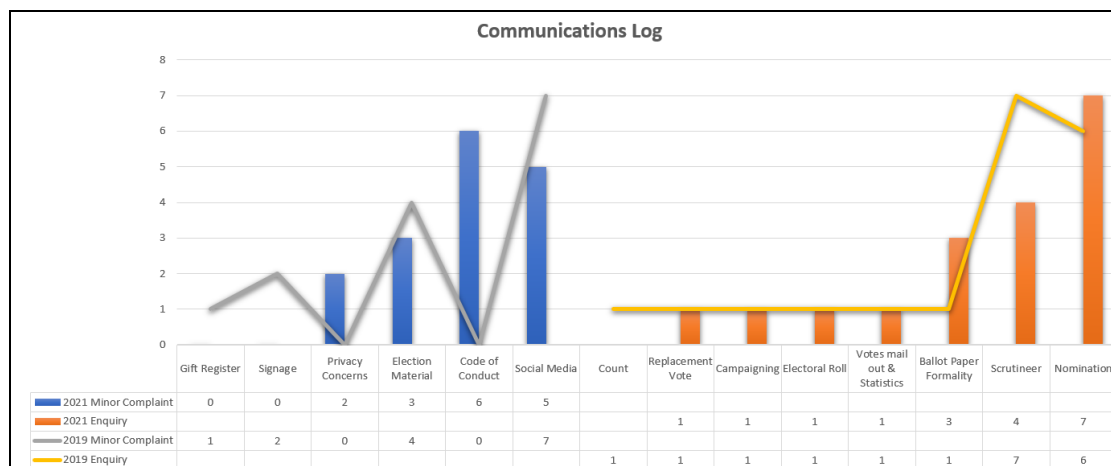
Returning Officer Election Report

- A/Manager Governance
- Compliance Administrator
- Chief Executive Officer
- The cashier team that processed the nomination deposits
- The reception Staff who always greeted me and all customers with a lovely smile and warm welcome; and finally
- Table Supervisors and Count Staff.

Complaints from candidates and scrutineers

A record of enquiries and complaints was kept and is summarised below. The nature of the complaints was minor, and all dealt with to the satisfaction of the Returning Officer and the WAEC ROLO (Liaison), in many cases, within 24 hours. The main complaints related to:

- The misunderstanding of a Returning Officers role in dealing with perceived 'false and misleading' election material;
- The authorisation of election material; and
- Code of Conduction Concerns.



Conclusion

Whilst I have been a Returning Officer in Local Government for a number of elections this is only the second time as Returning Officer for the City of Belmont, from an operational view, this election event was extremely efficient. In broad terms, I found the process to be organised and ample resources and support were provided by both the Electoral Commission and the City of Belmont. Although there were a few minor complaints during the election period it showed the campaigns were in some cases "vigorously contested", I considered the election to be incident-free.

In closing, I would like to thank the candidates, the City of Belmont, and the WA Electoral Commission, and I look forward to working with you all again in the future.

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