



Isle of Man
Government

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Proposed Election Observation Mission by the
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
British Islands and Mediterranean Region

Tynwald — July 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the April sitting of Tynwald, Members supported the following motion tabled by the Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Perkins:

That the Council of Ministers should consider inviting a CPA Election Observation Team for the September General Election; and should report to the July sitting of Tynwald.

2. Legislative position

- 2.1 Ensuring that elections are properly administered is vital in maintaining the public's confidence in the democratic process and in protecting the Isle of Man's international reputation.
- 2.2 Independent election observation provides an impartial assessment of a nation's electoral process and the extent to which it complies with international standards.
- 2.3 Section 90 of the Elections (Keys and Local Authorities) Act 2020 allows for elections to the House of Keys to be observed by accredited observers from named bodies that have a genuine interest in the outcome of the election.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's British Islands and Mediterranean Region has expressed an interest in conducting an election observation mission in the Isle of Man for the General Election in September.
- 3.2 The CPA initially made contact via the Speaker of the House of Keys. The Head of the Crown & Elections team in the Cabinet Office has subsequently held a virtual meeting with the election co-ordinator at the CPA BIMR to establish contact and share relevant information.
- 3.3 Typically, a mission involves a two-week visit by a team of eight representatives:
- 1 x Head of Mission
 - 2 x Election Analysts
 - 3 x Political Observers from other CPA nations
 - 2 x members of CPA staff
- 3.4 The estimated cost of an election mission of this size and scope is £40,000. It is customary for funding to be provided by the host nation's parliament, rather than by the CPA itself.

- 3.5 Support for the proposed CPA mission in September 2021 would represent an unexpected cost that has not been budgeted for by Tynwald or by the Isle of Man Government.

4. Proposed Isle of Man election mission

- 4.1 The CPA has conducted election observation missions in many of the Mediterranean regions, as well as [Jersey in 2018](#) and [Guernsey in 2020](#).
- 4.2 The CPA mission to Guernsey in 2020 was conducted virtually because of the travel restrictions in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Consequently, the cost of that mission was significantly reduced, with no requirement for travel, accommodation or office space.
- 4.3 The proposed visit to the Isle of Man in September 2021 would be conducted along similar lines to previous in-country missions. This would involve the CPA mission team setting up an office in the Island approximately two weeks prior to polling day and conducting interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including election officers, candidates, voters, returning officers and media.
- 4.4 The CPA team would also observe proceedings at polling stations and count venues on Election Day ahead of publishing a report setting out its findings and any recommendations.

5. CPA methodology

- 5.1 The CPA has published a [Handbook for Election Observation Missions](#), which sets out its methodology and describes how election observation missions are planned, deployed and implemented.
- 5.2 The CPA is committed to ensuring a professional approach based on observation of all aspects of the electoral process in accordance with international obligations, commitments and standards for democratic elections.
- 5.3 Through this, it can promote transparency and accountability, deter fraud and enhance public confidence and participation in the electoral process. This in turn, can strengthen democratic institutions and reduce the potential for election-related violence, contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability.

6. Invitation and funding

- 6.1 The CPA has stated that it would invoice the Isle of Man for all the costs associated with its electoral mission, including travel, accommodation and office expenses.

- 6.2 It has further advised that it would not be appropriate for funding to be provided by the Crown & Elections team in the Cabinet Office, as there could be a perceived conflict of interest.
- 6.3 It is the usual practice for the parliament of the island or territory to issue the invitation and meet the costs of a CPA election mission, rather than executive government. In the other Crown Dependencies where the CPA has observed elections, the parliaments of Jersey and Guernsey sent the letter of invitation and put in place the funding.
- 6.4 The Clerk of Tynwald's Office has offered to act as the conduit for the proposed CPA mission, but has indicated that it does not have sufficient funds to finance unforeseen expenditure of approximately £40,000.
- 6.5 The budget provided to the Cabinet Office to support the administration of the 2021 General Election is allocated to meet essential expenditure, including statutory obligations such as the payment of constituency Returning Officers, the postage of candidate manifestos, the hire of polling stations and the publication of public notices.

7. Further information

- 7.1 Tynwald has approved the Elections (Keys and Local Authorities) Act 2020, which consolidates election rules within a single piece of primary legislation.
- 7.2 The Act has been shaped by scrutiny in the branches, as well as extensive stakeholder engagement, expert advice and public feedback, including:
- The Tynwald Select Committee report on the 'Organisation and Operation of the General Election'
 - Two independent reports by Mr John Turner, the former Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators
 - Responses to two public consultations
- 7.3 The Act also makes provision for an Isle of Man Electoral Commission to be established after the 2021 General Election. The Commission will review the number and boundaries of Keys constituencies and consider any other election matters as directed by Tynwald.
- 7.4 The 2021 General Election process will be subject to external scrutiny, as an observer who is accredited with the UK Electoral Commission has been granted permission to observe proceedings in September.

8. Options

The Council of Ministers was invited to consider a number of possible options at its meeting on Thursday 24 June:

A) Tynwald to fund the CPA BIMR election mission

Invite the Clerk of Tynwald's Office to meet the costs of the CPA BIMR election mission.

B) Cabinet Office to fund the CPA BIMR election mission

Invite the Cabinet Office to meet the costs of the CPA BIMR election mission.

C) Tynwald to fund a virtual CPA BIMR election mission

Invite the Clerk of Tynwald's Office to meet the costs of a virtual CPA BIMR election mission.

D) Do not fund the CPA BIMR election mission

This would remove the need for Tynwald or executive government to meet £40,000 of unbudgeted expenditure. Failing to open up the Island's electoral processes to external scrutiny by the CPA may negatively impact our international reputation as an open and transparent jurisdiction.

9. Conclusion

Having considered the options, the Council of Ministers decided to invite the Clerk of Tynwald's Office to issue the invitation and meet the costs of the CPA BIMR election observation mission, with funding to be underwritten in full by Treasury.

The invitation has been made by the Council of Ministers and has been accepted by the Clerk of Tynwald's Office.

The Council of Ministers is grateful to the Clerk of Tynwald's Office for its co-operation in this matter and looks forward to welcoming the CPA Election Observation Mission to the Island later this year.



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