

To all Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

AGENDA

Notice is given that a Meeting of the above Committee
is to be held as follows:

VENUE Room 008 - Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU
DATE: Tuesday, 21st March, 2017
TIME: 10.00 am

Items for Discussion:

- | | Page No. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Apologies for absence. | |
| 2. To consider the extent, if any, to which the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting. | |
| 3. Declarations of Interest, if any. | |
| 4. Minutes of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee Meeting held on 22nd November, 2016 | 1 - 4 |
| A. Reports where the public and press may not be excluded. | |
| 5. Electoral Services Update on Key Issues. | 5 - 10 |
| 6. Individual Electoral Registration - Progress Report. | 11 - 18 |

Jo Miller
Chief Executive

Issued on: Monday, 13th March, 2017

Governance Officer
for this meeting:

Amber Torrington
Tel. 01302 737462

Members of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee

Chair – Councillor Phil Cole
Vice-Chair – Councillor James Hart

Councillors Nick Allen, Sean Gibbons, Pat Haith, Charlie Hogarth, Majid Khan, John McHale, Jane Nightingale, Kevin Rodgers and Sue Wilkinson.

Agenda Item 4.

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2016

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held in Room 007 B - CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2016, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Phil Cole
Vice-Chair - Councillor James Hart

Councillors Nick Allen, Charlie Hogarth, Majid Khan, John McHale, Jane Nightingale, Kevin Rodgers and Sue Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sean Gibbons and Pat Haith.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

There were no declarations reported at the meeting.

6 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JULY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee held on the 12th July, 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7 PROPOSAL TO TEST SMARTPHONE TECHNOLOGY FOR VOTING

The Committee were asked to consider a report which would examine the possibility of piloting a new voting method in elections, beginning with a non-statutory election.

The e-voting pilot would allow voting by downloading an app onto a smart-phone. The system used Block-chain technology and was extremely secure.

Members were advised that the Block-chain offered the opportunity to increase participation in the democratic process by allowing citizens to use the technology to securely vote electronically in elections. It could be used to:

- Easily verify their citizenship and right to vote.
- Receive electoral material from all candidates.
- Vote securely from any location.

It was noted that any pilot scheme would seek to establish whether a Block-chain voting option would increase voter participation (especially amongst the "smartphone

generation”), increase voter satisfaction and trust, as the transparent nature of the block-chain would allow voters to verify that their vote was counted.

It was reported that the first step proposed was for Doncaster to test the concept among the “smart phone generation”, by seeking to use the technology for the election of the Doncaster Youth Council representatives, who were currently elected area by area with voting taking place among pupils age 16+ in Doncaster’s schools. The next elections were due to take place in February 2017.

Following the introduction of the report, the Chair Councillor Phil Cole sought Members’ views. Members felt that it was a good innovation and was good for engaging with young people. However Members expressed some concern in relation to the provision of resources for the Youth Council elections during the preparation for May’s Mayoral and all-out Council election. Members enquired whether it was feasible for Smart phone technology to be used for future elections such as Local/Mayoral elections. Members were advised that the Council’s Electoral Team would be interested observers of the pilot but would otherwise have no involvement as the Youth Council elections were carried out by Children’s Services. It was also noted that the Director of Learning Opportunities and Skills, Damian Allen was interested in moving forward with the proposal. With regard to elections carried out by the Electoral Team, it was advised that there would be a lot to learn and questions to be asked to gain assurances that Smart Phone Technology could be used for statutory elections particularly when there was still some reluctance by the public to the use of postal votes.

Councillor Charlie Hogarth asked whether there was any way Members of the Committee could look at how the system worked. The Chair suggested that the Committee receive a presentation by the company supplying the Block-chain technology.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Committee request that the Directorate of Learning Opportunities and Skills hold the election for the Doncaster Youth Council representatives by using smartphone technology; and
- (2) a report be submitted to the next meeting asking the Committee to consider when the first election would be that this technology could be piloted.

8 EVALUATION OF THE BURGHWALLIS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REFERENDUM HELD ON 27TH OCTOBER 2016

The Committee considered a report which outlined the details of the second Neighbourhood Planning Referendum election that took place in Burghwallis on Thursday 27th October, 2016.

Members were advised that the outcome of the referendum was in favour of using the Neighbourhood Plan for Burghwallis to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. Out of an electorate of 245 the number of electors who voted at the Referendum was 87 (35.51% turnout) of which 76 electors were in favour of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Burghwallis area.

Councillor Kevin Rodgers asked whether elections for such small areas could be carried out by post instead of having a Polling Station. It was advised that there was a requirement to have a Polling Station and a minimum of two staff. It was also noted that the cost of the election was borne by the Planning directorate who were eligible to receive funding.

Members were also advised that there were 2 further Referendums for Armthorpe and Edlington. Although no date had been set both plans had been forwarded to independent examiners.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9 UPDATE ON THE ANNUAL CANVASS

The Committee received an update report on the Annual Canvass and the number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team. Since the production of the report a further breakdown of the Household Enquiry Form (HEF) was circulated at the meeting which showed a further increase in responses. It was also envisaged that this would continue throughout this week through the telephone canvassing exercise. Further details with regard to how the Electoral Team were being proactive to increase the number of electors were identified within paragraph 8 of the report.

In response to a query regarding the use of all agencies in helping to increase responses, it was reported that data matching takes place with the Council's Council Tax and Benefits Team which gives access to the system to enable double checking on electors particularly in relation to empty properties.

It was asked what the cost difference was for posting forms. Members were advised that the Council pay for the service which was part of the express system and whilst a definite figure could not be given, it was around 10p which was not a huge amount although there was still a significant amount of officer time imputing the information from the forms. Members felt that people may be more inclined to register to vote on-line if there was an incentive to do so. It was noted that although the Annual Canvass would be published on the 1st December, further canvass work would continue within January and February.

Overall members were extremely pleased with the report and conveyed their thanks to Trina and the Electoral Services Team who provided an excellent service to the residents of the Borough.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

10 URGENT ACTION TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 36 - TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO HIGH MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Committee received a report which confirmed the action taken in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 36 in March 2016 to appoint Councillors Cynthia Ransome and Jonathan Wood on a temporary basis to High Melton Parish Council for the purpose of attending a meeting to establish a quorum and enable the Parish Council to make necessary appointments to its membership.

RESOLVED that the urgent action taken in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 36 by the Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services on 17 March 2016 in consultation with the Chair of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee be noted.

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services stated that since the Committee had last met Trina Barber had now been appointed to the post of Electoral Services Manager on a permanent basis. The Committee congratulated Trina on her recent appointment and for all her hard work carried out whilst in her interim role.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____

21st March 2017

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update to Members on preparations for the combined Local Government and Mayoral Elections taking place on Thursday 4th May 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Committee is asked to note the report and make any additional comments in relation to the contents.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

3. Having accessible and well organised elections is key to public engagement in the democratic process.

BACKGROUND

4. The Terms of Reference of this Committee provide for an overview of Electoral Services issues. Set out below is the current position in respect of recent and current activity.

PREPARATIONS FOR COMBINED MAYORAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

5. The Local Government Elections for Doncaster MBC Ward councillors will take place on Thursday 4th May 2017 combined with an Election for the Mayor of Doncaster. The hours of poll are 7.00am to 10.00pm.
6. The Verification of all ballot papers will take place on Thursday 4th May 2017 at Doncaster Racecourse followed immediately with the counting of the Mayoral ballot papers. The Local Ward Councillor ballot papers will commence on Friday 5th May at 1.00pm and the counting sheets method will be used.
7. Arrangements for recruiting staff are complete with all positions appointed to, any staff that we employ on polling stations will not be engaged on the Thursday evening Verification/Count but are able to work on Friday's Count.
8. All polling stations have been booked and confirmed with the following new polling stations identified. These new polling stations will be highlighted on polling cards notifying electors of a change to their previous polling place.

- Bessacarr Ward – St Francis Church Hall has been designated as the new polling place for polling district EF replacing Willow Primary School as the School was unable to remain open on polling day.
- Tickhill and Wadworth Ward – Carr Lodge Academy has been designated as the new polling place for polling district IA replacing Time 2 Play as the premises are very expensive to hire. Carr Lodge Academy is a new building at a much cheaper rate. The School will not need to close on polling day as the polling station can be kept separate.
- Thorne and Moorends Ward – The Community Centre, Northgate has been designated as the new polling place for polling district QG/QH replacing Miners Welfare & Community Centre. As a potential Candidate manages the centre it is thought better on this occasion to utilise an alternative venue. The new venue offers similar facilities and remains a central venue for electors.

There will also be the polling station finder on the council’s website and on all polling cards. This will allow electors to search for their polling station by typing in a post code or address and they will be given their polling station location, map and directions of how to get there from their home address.

9. A timetable of key dates is provided at Appendix A.

HATFIELD TOWN COUNCIL – HATFIELD WOODHOUSE BY-ELECTION

10. Due to a recent vacancy advertised, an election was called by ten electors for the vacancy within Hatfield Town Council – Hatfield Woodhouse ward to be filled by election. The Election will take place on Thursday 23rd March 2017. The Verification and Count will take place at the close of poll at the Methodist Church Hall, Main Street – which is also being used as a polling place on polling day. The cost of this election will be charged to the Town Council.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

11. All of the above are statutory duties and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. This report is primarily for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY PRIORITIES

12.

	Priority	Implications
	We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.	By ensuring the necessary arrangements are in place to deliver well-run elections and improving our reputation by meeting the Electoral Commission’s Performance Standards.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

13. Sufficient resources will need to be made available to run two Elections so close together and to continue to drive individual registration in order to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties detailed above.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The arrangements detailed in this report are designed to ensure compliance with a range of statutory duties including:

- Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
- Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The costs of the Local and Mayoral combined Elections will be at a full cost to the Council.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTORS

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous EDSC reports

Jo Miller
Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer

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Election Time Table Calculator Timetable of Proceedings for Thursday 4 May 2017

PERP	from Monday 27 March 2017
Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 27 March 2017
Receipt of Nominations	Monday 27 th March 2017 to 4:00 pm Tuesday 4 April 2017
Withdrawal of Candidate	by 4:00 pm Tuesday 4 April 2017
Appointment of Election Agents	by 4:00 pm Tuesday 4 April 2017
Publication of Notice of Election Agents	4:00 pm Tuesday 4 April 2017
Publication of Statements of Persons Nominated	4:00 pm Wednesday 5 April 2017
Last Date for Registration	Thursday 13 April 2017
Receipt of Postal Vote Applications	5:00 pm Tuesday 18 April 2017
Despatch of Postal Votes	from Thursday 20 April 2017
Publication of Notice of Poll	Tuesday 25 April 2017
Receipt of Proxy Vote Applications	5:00 pm Tuesday 25 April 2017
Appointment of Poll and Count Agents	by Wednesday 26 April 2017
First Day to Issue Replacement Lost Postal Ballot Papers	Thursday 27 April 2017
Receipt of Emergency Proxy Vote Applications	5:00 pm Thursday 4 May 2017
Last Day to Issue Replacement Spoilt or Lost Postal Ballot Papers 2017	5:00 pm Thursday 4 May 2017
Day of Poll	7:00 am to 10:00 pm Thursday 4 May 2017
Return of Election Expenses	by Thursday 8 June 2017

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21st March 2017

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION – PROGRESS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update to Members on a number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and Annual Canvass.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Committee is asked to approve the report and make any additional comments in relation to the contents.

2016 ANNUAL CANVASS

4. The Annual Canvass commenced at the beginning of August 2016, which was shortly delayed due to the EU Referendum. At that point there were 135,650 properties in Doncaster and an electorate of 223,711. We sent out Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) to those 135,650 properties within Doncaster and received 69,902 (51.55%) responses at this 1st stage without any prompting (2015 we received 52,273 - 38.70%). Those responses came via the internet, post, text or telephone. Reminder letters were then issued to the 65,709 non responding properties and the response increased to 94,176 (69.45%) (2015 we received 81,781 - 61.29%). A further 2nd stage reminder was issued to 41,427 non-responding properties. During September to November canvassers were out door knocking and telephoning the remaining outstanding 37,319 non-responding properties.
5. We published our new full register on the 1st December 2016 and Doncaster's Electorate was 221,225. The register had grown by 4,678 electors since the last fully published register on 1st December 2015 when the electorate then was 216,547. As of the 1st March 2017 the full electorate was 222,590. A full electorate breakdown by ward is provided at Appendix A.

6. Breakdown of HEF responses by date and method compared to 2015

<u>Date</u>	<u>Total Properties</u>	<u>Total Retn</u>	<u>Total% Retn Rate</u>	<u>Outstanding Forms</u>	<u>Retns by Post</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Web</u>	<u>SMS</u>	<u>ERS Retn Total</u>	<u>% ERS</u>	<u>2015 total returns</u>	<u>2015 total % return rate</u>
17-Aug	135650	41,754	31.00%	93,875	21,859	6,648	8,704	4,498	19,850	14.63%		
23-Aug	135650	52,035	38.35%	83,615	30,040	7,160	9,854	4,912	21,926	16.16%	50,609	37.49%
26-Aug	135634	69,902	51.55%	65,709	47,202	7,332	10,196	5,056	22,584	16.65%	52,273	38.70%
5-Sep	135638	71,852	52.98%	63,758	47,806	7,644	10,915	5,371	23,930	17.64%	58,109	43.03%
12-Sep	135638	77,571	57.19%	58,039	50,372	8,425	12,030	6,580	27,035	19.93%	59,378	43.97%
19-Sep	135632	90,206	66.50%	45,398	58,030	9,361	14,238	8,275	31,874	23.50%	69,022	52.48%
26-Sep	135633	94,176	69.45%	41,427	61,140	9,500	14,667	8,509	32,676	24.10%	81,781	61.29%
3-Oct	135632	95,658	70.54%	39,944	61,928	9,619	15,013	8,723	33,355	24.59%	82,043	61.32%
10-Oct	135641	99,017	73.02%	36,584	64,752	9,693	15,261	8,896	33,850	24.95%	82,349	61.35%
24-Oct	135639	99,952	73.71%	35,647	65,540	9,713	15,333	8,939	33,985	25.05%	83,018	61.45%
7-Nov	135644	103,806	76.55%	31,792	68,857	9,766	15,548	9,136	34,450	25.39%	84,220	62.37%
10-Nov	135645	105,194	77.58%	30,403	70,049	9,795	15,632	9,193	34,620	25.52%	85,745	63.50%
14-Nov	135645	106,152	78.29%	29,444	70,783	9,825	15,740	9,263	34,828	25.67%	88,748	65.72%
21-Nov	135651	109,621	80.83%	25,998	73,745	9,895	15,973	9,431	35,299	26.02%	90,006	68.45%
30-Nov	135678	112,364	82.87%	23,230	76,216	10,494	16,103	9,921	35,518	26.17%	96,659	71.58%

7. To help increase the response to the annual canvass and ensure the Electoral Register was up to date accurate when publishing, Electoral Services were proactive to ensure the residents of Doncaster didn't lose their right to vote.

Telephone Canvassing

Due to the success of this last year we undertook a Telephone Canvass alongside the door knock canvass. This enabled us to contact those hard to reach areas/electors where door knocking was proving to be unsuccessful. At the same time we carried out an 'Invitation to Register' canvass to chase up the non-responding electors to try and obtain the information there and then over the phone; we also had a dedicated phone line for electors to call electoral services back with their information should they not have it to hand.

Care Homes & HMOs

We had dedicated Canvass Team Leaders canvassing every care home and housing with multiple occupancies (HMOs) within the borough by arranging an appointment with the Care Manager and/or Building Manager to build up a close working relationship to ensure we are kept up to date on the frequent residential changes.

Targeting hard to reach/unapproachable areas

Where necessary extra support and time was given to selective areas such as foreign nationals that may not understand how to complete the forms. SLHD have provided access to high rise flats and buildings where entry was

difficult for non-key holders. We also targeted any hard to reach areas by telephone.

School/Colleges

We are campaigning within Schools and Colleges through their social media links by providing schools with adverts and information to put on their social media to try and increase the number of attainers ready for when they reach voting age.

Social Media

The web team update social media, share and re-tweet information out to Doncaster residents from the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office.

#OurDay

Electoral Services took part in the Local Government Association #OurDay by submitting a team 'selfie' whilst carrying out Telephone Canvassing on the 15th November. This captured the team working hard to obtain those importing responses and also helped promote and encourage registering to vote.

CURRENT ELECTORAL PROACTIVE ACTIVITY

8. A proactive approach is required throughout the year and not just during the canvass period in order to maintain an accurate and complete register, ensuring as far as possible that all eligible persons are on the register and that all non-eligible persons are removed. To ensure this is met we are currently carrying out the following initiatives.

Electoral Commission Thunderclap

Social Media promoting #OnYourDoorstep – We are sharing videos to help highlight the role of local government, raising the awareness of our local elections and reminding people they need to register to vote. The first one took place on 7th March 2016. You can get involved too by registering at <https://www.thunderclap.it/projects/53207-onyourdoorstep> and let's ensure as many people across Doncaster as possible can have their say on Thursday 4th May!

Home movers

Working with the Council Tax department we are contacting any new home movers and encouraging/reminding them to ensure they remember to change addresses on the electoral register.

Contact Centre and one stop shop reception

The Contact Centre and the one stop shop in the Civic Office are asking customers if they are on the electoral register and registered to vote for the upcoming elections. They have a web based version of the electoral register which allows them to check if someone is registered, apply for postal vote or register them, there and then. This is encouraging people to register and help raise awareness of the upcoming combined elections taking place on May 4th.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are comprehensive statutory provisions covering the delivery of electoral registration activity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. Cabinet Office continues to supply funding towards electoral registration activity. An application for extra funding has been submitted to Cabinet Office towards the cost of Individual Electoral Registration activities during 2016/2017.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous Elections and Democratic Structures Committee reports

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

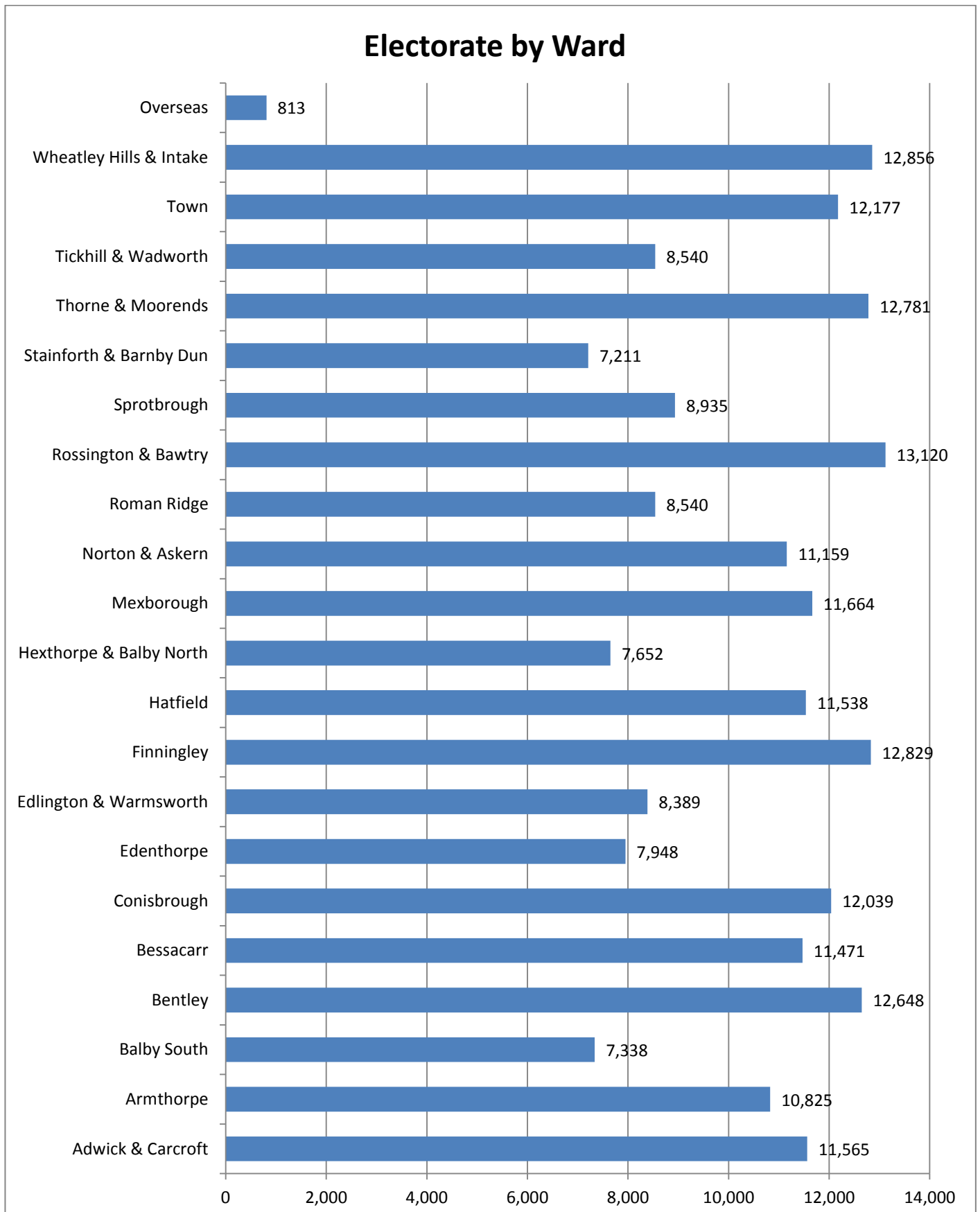
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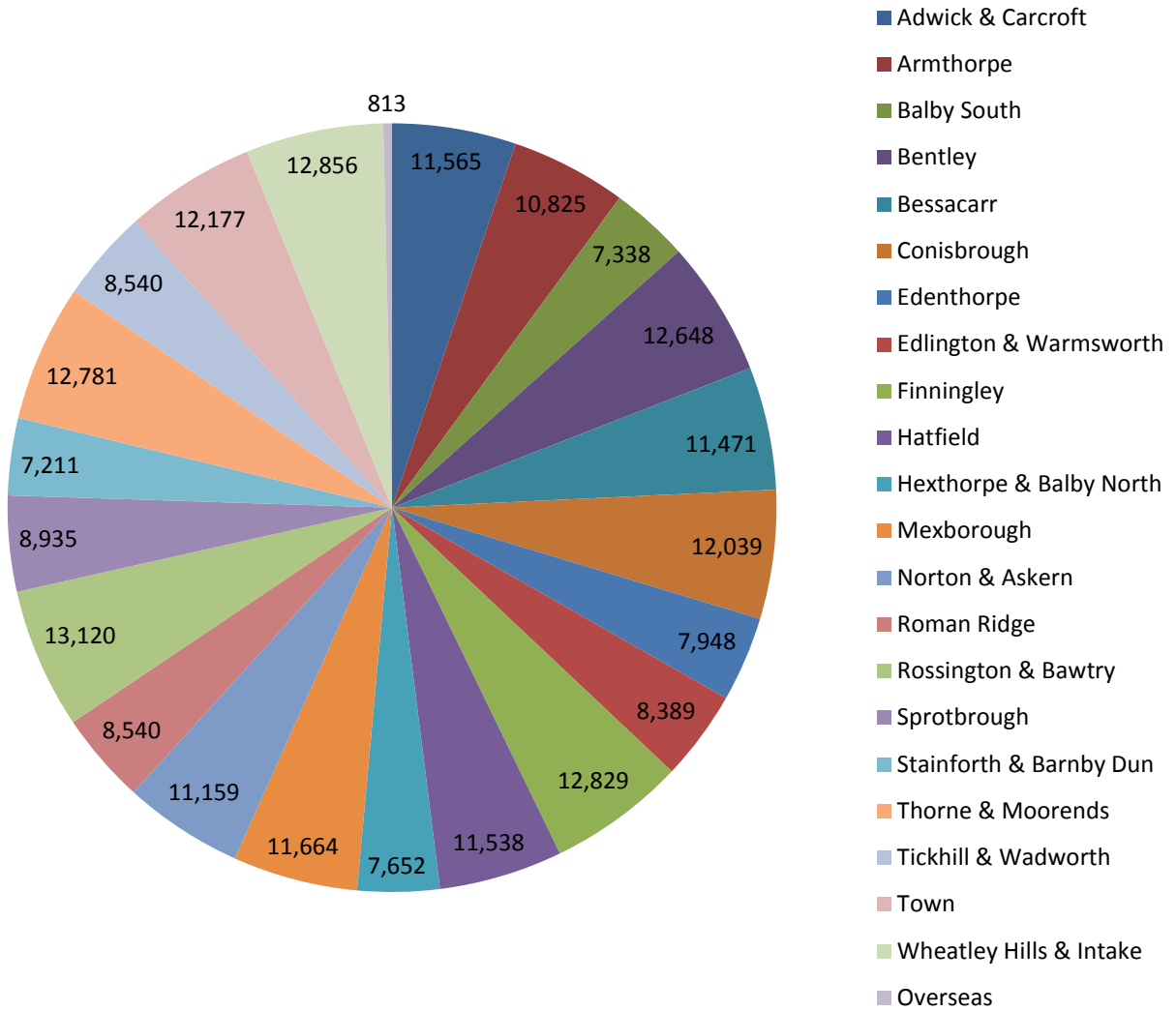
Individual Electoral Registration (IER) Published Register 1st December 2016

Register breakdown

Electorate: 221,225 + 813 overseas electors



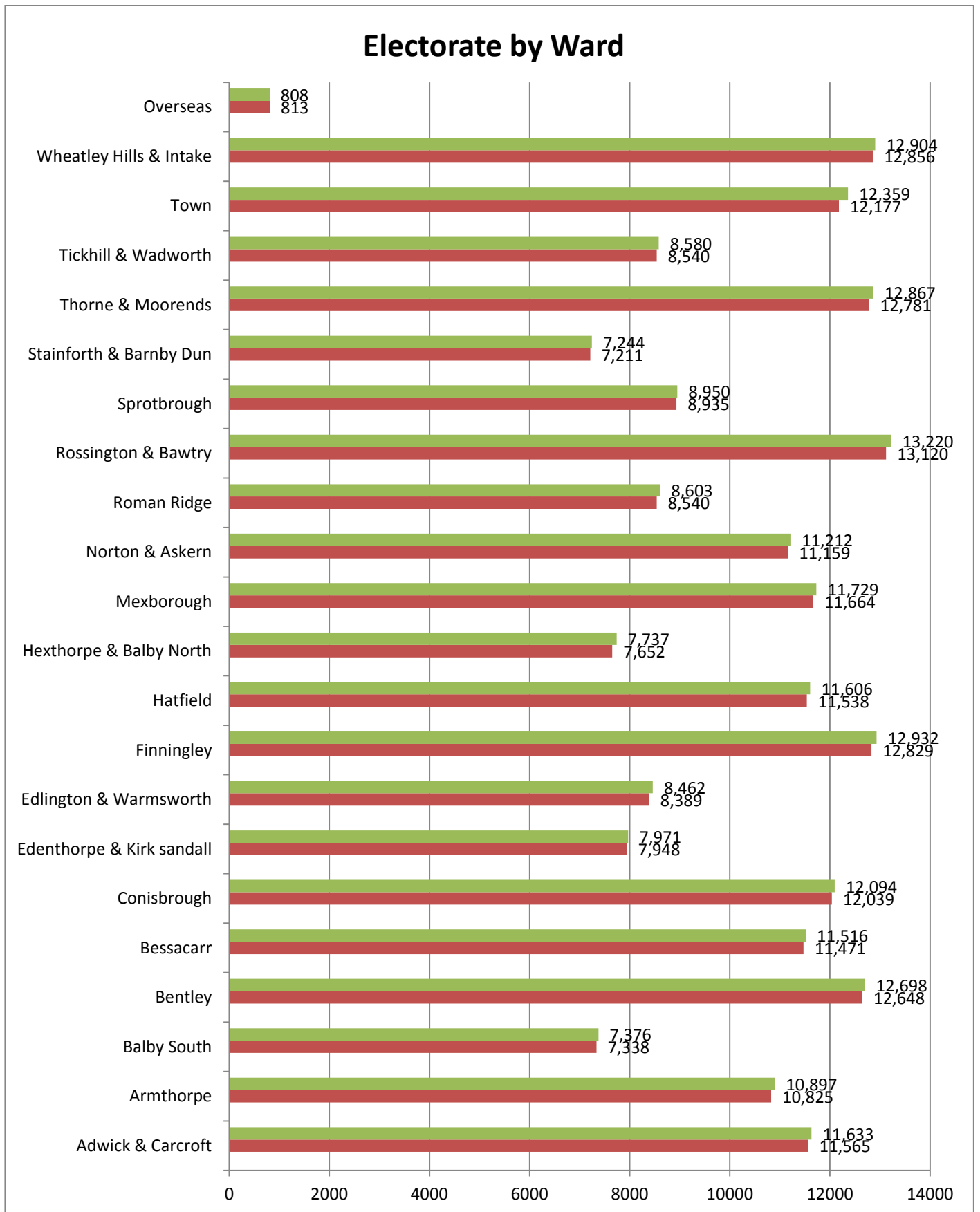
Electorate by Ward



Current March Electorate compared to published register 1st December 2016

1st December 2016 - Electorate: 221,225 + 813 overseas electors

1st March 2017 - Electorate: 222,590 + 808 overseas electors



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