



City of
Doncaster
Council

Agenda

To all Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

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

Venue: Council Chamber, Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster DN1 3BU.

Date: Tuesday, 18th July, 2023

Time: 10.00 am.

BROADCASTING NOTICE

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Damian Allen
Chief Executive

Issued on: Monday 10th July 2023

Governance Services Officer for this meeting: Amber Torrington
Tel. 01302 737462

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 7th February 2023. 1 - 4
- A. Reports where the public and press may not be excluded.**
5. Elections Update. 5 - 12
 6. Canvass Update. 13 - 18

MEMBERS OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE (11)

Chair – Councillor Julie Grace

Vice-Chair – Councillor Nick Allen

Councillor James Church	Councillor Gemma Cobby
Councillor Debbie Hutchinson	Councillor Barry Johnson
Councillor Jake Kearsley	Councillor Emma Muddiman-Rawlins
Councillor Thomas Noon	Councillor Ian Pearson
Councillor Andy Pickering	

Agenda Item 4.

CITY OF DONCASTER COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2023

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 2023, at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Julie Grace
Vice-Chair - Councillor Nick Allen

Councillors Duncan Anderson, James Church, Gemma Cobby, Debbie Hutchinson, Emma Muddiman-Rawlins, Thomas Noon and Andy Pickering.

APOLOGIES:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jake Kearsley.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

No declarations were made at the meeting.

12 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22ND NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 ELECTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided an update on current Elections activity and any upcoming changes, by-elections and Neighbourhood Planning Referendums. Specifically, this report contained updates on:-

- The new requirement for voters to have Photo ID to be able to vote in person in polling stations;
- The annual absent voter refresh exercise and proposed changes under the Elections Act 2022; and
- The Auckley Neighbourhood Planning Referendum, that was likely to take place in March/April 2023.

The Electoral Services Manager gave an overview of the new requirement for electors to show an official form of photographic identification (ID) when voting in a polling station, which was coming into force for elections held from 4 May 2023 onwards. While there were no scheduled elections in Doncaster in 2023, the new measures would apply to any by-elections held from 4 May onwards. Upon receipt of an application, Electoral Registration Officers were required to provide those electors without a valid form of Photo ID with a free voter identification document called a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) from January 2023, whether they had polls or not.

It was reported that since the online application portal for applying for Voter Authority Certificates went live on 16th January, the Council had received a total of 78 applications, which had been processed as follows:-

- 61 applications had been sent a Voter Authority Certificate
- 13 applications were on hold (not a suitable photo or register to vote application not yet cleared by DWP etc)
- 4 applications had been rejected (3 duplicate applications and one not registered and when contacted did not want to register or vote).

The Electoral Services Manager outlined the procedure for processing the applications and explained that staff in the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop in the Civic Office had been briefed on the new requirements so that they could assist with any queries or calls regarding the new Photo ID.

Discussion followed, during which the Electoral Services Manager explained, in answer to a question regarding communications, that a national advertising campaign by the Electoral Commission was currently underway on various platforms. She stated that there was a need to strike the right balance in terms of raising awareness of the new ID requirement, whilst also not causing confusion amongst electors in light of the fact that there were no scheduled elections being held in Doncaster this year. She also pointed out that there had already been some confusion with electors thinking that the new photo ID requirement applied also to postal voters, which was not the case.

With regard to funding, the Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the Council had so far received £13,000 from the Government's New Burdens Funding to cover the cost of implementing the new measures, and that more would be made available in the next financial year when elections were due to be held, which would help cover the cost of training polling station staff on the new requirements and the provision of privacy booths in stations for people who wore face coverings on religious grounds for example. Members also noted that the funding was expected to cover the cost of a temporary additional member of staff in the electoral services team to assist with processing of voter ID applications at the time of elections, when it was likely that a higher number of applications would be coming through.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services explained that whilst the Voter Authority Certificates had a 10-year validity in all likelihood they would require an early replacement as they were simply an A4 piece of paper, not a laminated card. As there were no scheduled May elections, the Council had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of other authorities as regards the impact of the new measures and examples of good practice.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

14 CANVASS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided an update to Members on the final outcome of the Annual Canvass and a detailed breakdown of the statistics for each Route and final electorate by ward.

The Electoral Services Manager updated the Committee on the final figures in relation to the responses received from properties in this year's canvass, broken down according to the three routes followed for each property, i.e. Route 1 (matched

properties), Route 2 (unmatched properties) and Route 3 (Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO)). The Committee was reminded that as a result of the canvass reforms in 2020, only properties where all the electors could not be matched against national and/or local data were required to respond. The aim of the canvass reform was to deliver a more efficient system by which Electoral Registration Officers could maintain their electoral registers with no negative effect on citizens, or on the accuracy and completeness of the registers.

It was reported that the overall response rate for all three Routes including those who did not need to respond was 90.27%, which was slightly down on last year's return.

The 2022 Annual Canvass had been completed and the revised Electoral Register was published on 1st December 2022 ensuring that the Electoral Registration Officer had met their statutory duty. The new Electorate as of 1st December 2022 stood at 224,636 electors and 58,331 postal voters. A detailed breakdown of the 1st December 2022 electorate by ward including postal vote breakdown was provided at Appendix A of the report.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

15 URGENT ITEM - REQUEST TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE PARISH OF BARNBURGH WITH HARLINGTON

The Chair informed the Committee that she had agreed to accept this report as an urgent item of business at today's meeting, the reasons for which were detailed in paragraph 3 of the report.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that a request had been received from the Barnburgh with Harlington Parish Council to change the name of the parish area to Barnburgh and Harlington. The change had been requested on the basis that Barnburgh and Harlington was the name that the parish was more generally known by and that had been used locally for a significant length of time.

In accordance with Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, such requests were considered by this Committee, which then made a recommendation to Full Council for ratification.

RESOLVED:-

- a) To RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL at its meeting on 27th February 2023 that the Barnburgh with Harlington parish be renamed Barnburgh and Harlington; and
- b) That, if approved, a notice be published in accordance with the statutory requirements set out in paragraph 15 of the report.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____

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City of Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 18 July 2023

To: The Chair and Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

Report Title: Elections Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision?
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources	All Auckley	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is designed to provide an update on current Elections Activity and any upcoming changes, By-Elections and Neighbourhood Planning Referendums.
2. This report provides members with detailed information and results from the Auckley Neighbourhood Planning Referendum which took place on Thursday 20 April 2023.
3. This report also provides members with an update on the implementations from the Elections Act. Major changes have now been implemented from May 2023; voters across England are now required to bring photo ID to vote in person in a polling station. A new form of identification, the Voter Authority Certificate (VAC), was introduced as a form of ID for those who do not have another form of eligible ID.

EXEMPT REPORT

4. This is not an exempt report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. This report is for information, 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?

6. Having accessible and well-organised elections and referendums are key to public engagement in the democratic process. Elections are the cornerstone of our democratic process and are important to all of our residents. Elections give the electorate the opportunity to hold politicians to account and shape the future direction of national and local government.
7. While Doncaster did not have any scheduled elections in 2023, photo ID measures will apply to any by-elections from 4 May 2023 onwards. Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) are to provide those electors without a valid form of Photo ID with a free voter identification document called a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) from January 2023, whether they have polls or not.

Auckley Neighbourhood Planning Referendum - 20 April 2023

8. A Neighbourhood Planning Referendum took place in the Auckley area, (Auckley Parish Boundary polling districts KA and KF). The eligible electorate was 3,624 electors of which 1,007 were postal voters and of those, 332 postal votes (32.97%) were returned and personal identifiers correctly verified. 1 postal vote was rejected due to signature or date of birth not matching and that elector has been notified accordingly
9. On polling day 119 (4.55%) electors cast their vote in the two polling stations, adding that to the postal votes, gave a total of 451 ballot papers verified and a total turnout of 12.44%.
10. The outcome of the Referendum was in favour of using the Neighbourhood Plan for Auckley to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area. A full breakdown of the results can be found below:

Results

The 'Question' asked in the referendum was:

Do you want the City of Doncaster Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Auckley to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?

	Number of Votes
Number of votes cast in favour of a 'YES'	405
Number of votes cast in favour of a 'NO'	46

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:	Number of ballot papers
A want of an official mark	0
B voting for more than one answer	0
C writing or mark by which voter could be identified	0
D unmarked or void for uncertainty	0
Total	0

Electorate: 3,624	Ballot Papers Issued: 451	Turnout: 12.44 %
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ELECTIONS ACT UPDATE

Voter identification

11. The Government has introduced legislation to require electors to show an official form of photographic identification (ID) when voting in a polling station. This requirement came into force from 4 May 2023 onwards for the following polls (elections):

- Local Government elections (Borough and parish)
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- Combined Authority Mayoral elections
- Referendums
- Parliamentary by-elections (It will also apply to Parliamentary General elections from 5th October 2023)

Electors voting by post are not affected by the requirement for photographic ID. Electors who do not wish to show photographic ID can apply for a postal vote or a proxy vote in the normal way.

12. Any elector that does not have any suitable form of photographic ID, and an expired ID is no longer a good likeness or their name appears differently on the electoral register, they can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) - an A4 document containing a photograph of the applicant, supplied by the ERO. The online application portal www.gov.uk/voting-photo-id where an elector may apply for a Voter Authority Certificate went live on Monday 16th January 2023. Despite Doncaster having no polls on the 4th May we still received a high number of applications for the free photo ID - Voter Authority Certificates on the deadline day. Since the launch of the Voter Authority Certificate service on 16th January up to the May election deadline day of the 24th April - Doncaster received 406 applications in total despite no scheduled May elections.

13. The Council's Elections team took an active interest in the experiences of areas holding elections in May 2023 and their feedback from administering an election requiring Voter IDs. Several members of the Elections team supported Sheffield City Council during their May local and Parish Elections. This enabled the team to deal with voter queries on polling day regarding Voter ID by taking telephone calls in the office. Also visiting polling stations as an Inspector to see first hand photo ID being provided to polling staff and help deal with any queries. This will help prepare the team for when any by-elections occur before next May's Elections and focus on training needs to be provided to staff.

14. The Electoral Commission have produced a report on their key findings from May's Elections and the introduction of Voter ID. Their report is based on data recorded by polling station staff in May and states:

- 4% of all people who said they did not vote at the elections on 4 May listed the ID requirement as the reason. 3% said they did not have the necessary ID, and 1% said they disagreed with the new requirement.

- Of those that went to polling stations on 4 May, 0.25% of people who tried to vote were not issued with a ballot paper because of the new voter ID requirement.
- There were high awareness levels of the new requirement (87% immediately before the poll, and 92% immediately after). However there were lower levels of awareness among those without ID (74%).
- 89,552 people applied for a Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline and approximately 25,000 certificates were used as a form of ID on 4 May. The number of certificates issued and used was low compared with estimates of the number of voters who might not have any other accepted ID.
- At least 0.7% of people who tried to vote at a polling station were initially turned away but around two thirds of those people (63%) returned later in the day and were able to vote.

The full report can be found at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-id-may-2023-local-elections-england-interim-analysis>

15. Other changes that came into force on the 4th May 2023:

- Accessibility Changes; Improvement of support in polling stations for people with a wider range of disabilities through a general responsibility on ROs to consider the needs of disabled people and provide equipment to support them to vote.
- First Past the Post voting system introduced for any Mayoral elections in England and Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in England and Wales held on or after 4 May 2023 (including by-elections).

16. The next set of changes to be delivered are expected to be in October this year which will be the changes to postal and proxy voting arrangements and the delivery of an online application service for absent votes. The draft Statutory Instruments for these measures will be published for enhanced scrutiny in the coming weeks, with an accompanying Written Ministerial Statement on GOV.UK to announce their introduction, before they are laid in Parliament later in the summer. A small number of local authorities are currently taking part in testing the new system ahead of the service becoming available to the public once the legislation is made.








REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION


17. This report is primarily for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

18.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider –	Neutral or No implications
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			Negative overall	
 Tackling Climate Change				✓
Comments:				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work				✓
Comments:				
 Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs				✓
Comments:				
 Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all				✓
Comments:				
 Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs				✓
Comments:				
 Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough				✓
Comments:				
 Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future				✓
Comments:				

 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities				✓
Comments:				
Fair & Inclusive	✓			
<p>The Council has a duty to ensure Elections and Referendums are well managed to allow all eligible electors to freely vote by secret ballot ensuring freedom of expression and political debate by exercising their vote. The Council has worked hard to ensure that voting is accessible to all. A full Polling Places review was carried out in 2019 and full risk assessment reviews in 2021 to ensure all Polling Stations are compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and will continue to be reviewed to ensure they meet any new legislative requirements.</p>				

Legal Implications [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 06/07/2023]

19. 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, 2014, 2018
- The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2014, 2015 and 2018
- Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
- Elections Act 2022

Financial Implications [Officer Initials: CR | Date: 10/07/2023]

20. The government have committed to providing New Burdens Funding to local authorities via Section 31 Grants to cover the increased costs resulting from implementing measures in the Elections Act. An Initial grant of £12,952 was received in November 2022, with further grant in April 2023 of £6,901. Further funding expected by Autumn 2023.

21. Any costs associated with Neighbourhood Planning Referendums are claimed back from Central Government via the planning department.

Human Resources Implications

22. Human Resources Implications have not been requested for this report.

Technology Implications

23. Technology Implications have not been requested for this report

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

24. Ensuring the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the Council, RO and ERO meets the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards and complies with their legal statutory duties. Delivering well-run elections improve our reputation and meeting the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards.

CONSULTATION

25. Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

26. Association of Electoral Administrators newsletters www.aea-elections.co.uk
The Electoral Commission newsletters <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- 27.
- | | |
|-------|---|
| ERO | Electoral Registration Officer |
| RO | Returning Officer |
| DLUHC | The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities |
| VAC | Voter Authority Certificate |

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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Legal & Democratic Services

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Damian Allen

Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer

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City of Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 18 July 2023

To: The Chair and Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

Report Title: Canvass Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision?
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources	All	No

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 the preparations for the start of the Annual Canvass.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. 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?

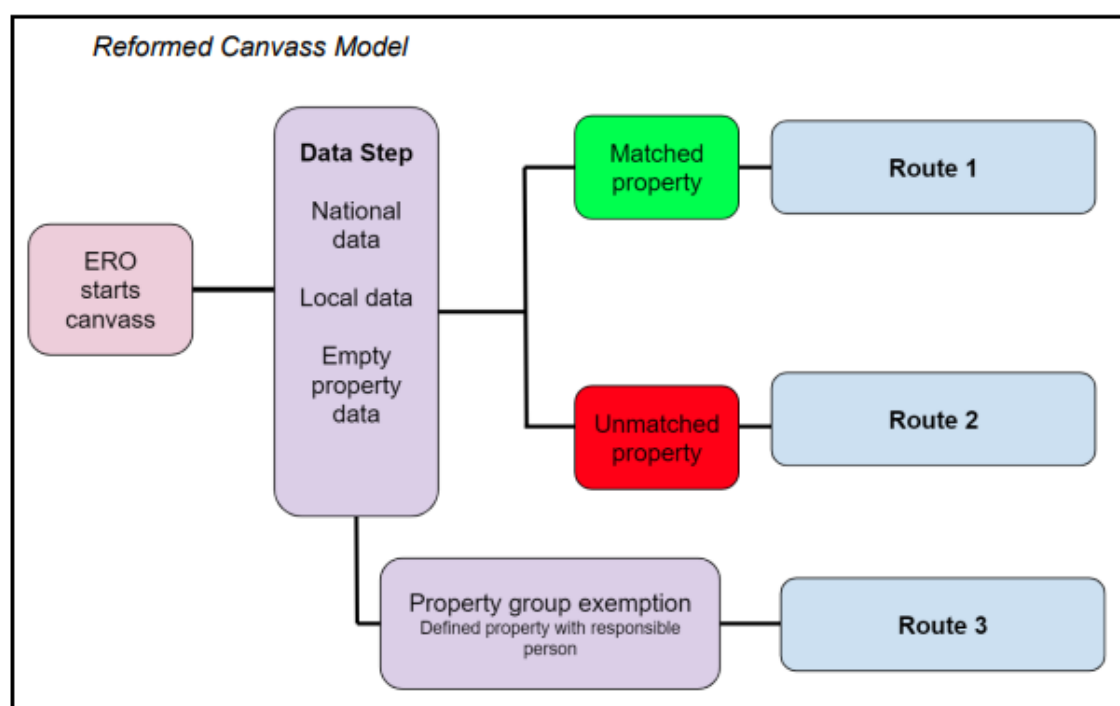
4. Ensuring the Electoral Register is as up to date as possible and carrying out proactive electoral activity is key to public engagement to ensure residents are registered to enable them to vote when an election occurs.

BACKGROUND

5. Each year the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has a duty to carry out a full annual review of the Electoral Register by contacting all residential addresses to establish if the information currently held on the Electoral Register is complete and accurate, this is called the Annual Canvass. The purpose of the canvass is to identify everyone who should be on the electoral register. This means identifying

citizens who should be registered but are currently not, as well as identifying electors who are no longer at a property and should therefore be removed from the register. A revised version of the electoral register must be published by December 1st each year, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

6. With the introduction of the canvass reforms in 2020, only properties where all the electors cannot be matched against national and/or local data are required to respond. The overall aim of canvass reform is to deliver a more efficient system by which Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) can maintain their electoral registers with no negative effect on citizens, or on the accuracy and completeness of the registers.
7. The canvass incorporates a 'data step' at the outset of the process. This informs the ERO, based on the data available, which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition, based on matching data on the electoral register against national Government data and, where relevant, locally held data sources. Local datasets are available to the ERO under their existing powers, provided by Regulations 23, 35 and 35A of the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001.



8. The ERO will follow one of three routes for each property:

Route 1 - the matched properties route, this will be used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition.

Route 2 - the unmatched properties route, this will be used for properties where data matching has highlighted that there may be a change to the information the ERO currently holds for the property.

Route 3 - These properties are defined as Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants.

Route 1

- 9. The National data matching process must take place between 1 June to 31 August 2023 and Electoral Services carried out the National data match download on 26 June 2023. There were 225,282 registered electors and 146,455 properties in Doncaster and 85.67% of electors and 111,010 (75.79%) properties successfully matched from the initial national data matching download for Route 1.
- 10. Electoral Services are now data mining in order to try to match any further properties and electors using the Councils local datasets and will continue to request data to establish further matches at Route 1, any outstanding unmatched properties will be put into Route 2 who will later be sent letters and e-mails asking for an updated response. A further 11,828 electors have been matched from Council Tax records and a further 400 properties.
- 11. Letters and e-mails will shortly be sent to all those who matched in Route 1 to notify them of our results and to only respond if there are changes to the information we currently hold on the Electoral Register.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED


- 12. Electoral Registration is a statutory function and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.








REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

- 13. This report is primary for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

14.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change				✓
Comments:				

 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work				✓
Comments:				
 Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs				✓
Comments:				
 Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all				✓
Comments:				
 Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs				✓
Comments:				
 Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough				✓
Comments:				
 Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future				✓
Comments:				
 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities				✓
Comments:				
Fair & Inclusive	✓			

The Council has a duty to ensure all eligible electors can register to vote and respond to canvass forms easily and are provided with several ways in order to do so. Registration information is also available in alternative languages, Braille and by video (YouTube) link on the Council Web page.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 06/07/2023]

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

- Representation of the People Act
- The Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations
- The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass Amendment) Regulations
- Local Government Act
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: CR | Date: 10/07/2023]

16. This work is funded solely from the Registration of Electors budget (NC003). Central Government no longer provide Councils with funding towards the annual canvass due to the reduction in the cost of delivering the Canvass under the Canvass Reforms.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no Human Resources Implications arising from this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

18. Technology implications have not been requested

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

19. Every effort is made to drive Individual Electoral Registration to ensure the Council and the ERO meets the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards and complies with their legal duties.

CONSULTATION

20. Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

21. Previous EDSC reports.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

22.

ERO Electoral Registration Officer

HMO Homes of Multiple Occupancy

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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