

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL  
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

6TH JULY, 2011

A meeting of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the MANSION HOUSE, DONCASTER on WEDNESDAY, 6TH JULY, 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Kevin Rodgers  
Vice-Chair Councillor Moira Hood

Councillors Patricia Bartlett, Marilyn Green, Cliff Hampson, Rachel Hodson, John McHale, Bill Mordue and Sue Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Blackham and Deborah Hutchinson.

1. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST, IF ANY

No declarations were made at the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22ND FEBRUARY, 2011.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee held on the 22nd February, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE.

The Committee considered a report informing Members of the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference of the Committee which were due to be considered at Full Council meeting on 21st July, 2011 as part of a wider detailed review of the Council's Constitution.

At its Annual meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, the Council agreed that the existing Terms of Reference of all Committees and Sub-Committees should remain in operation pending the outcome of a detailed review of the Council's Constitution. The Constitution review would include proposed changes to reflect the fact that whilst this Committee would

continue to have lead responsibility for reviewing most parts of the constitution, in future any proposed constitutional revisions relating to Code of Conduct issues or ethical governance would be reported directly to Council by the Standards Committee. Similarly, the Audit Committee would report direct to Council any proposed changes relating to corporate governance. This proposed revision would help streamline and clarify the procedures for approval of constitutional revisions falling within the remits of the Audit and Standards Committees in the future.

Additionally, the reference to the determination of Members' Allowances had been removed from the Terms of Reference of the Committee, as it was the responsibility of an Independent Remuneration Panel to recommend these changes to Full Council.

RESOLVED that the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee for 2011/12, as detailed in paragraphs 4 and 5 and Appendix A to the report which were to be considered at the Council Meeting in July 2011 be noted.

4. COMBINED LOCAL (DISTRICT AND PARISH COUNCIL) ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUM ON VOTING SYSTEM AT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – 5<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011 – POST ELCTION EVALUATION REPORT.

The Committee considered a report providing members with an evaluation of the elections and referendum.

It was reported that whilst the elections as a whole were delivered successfully, with any project of this nature it was inevitable that there would be some areas where things would not operate as planned or as intended. In looking at such issues to identify areas of improvement there would be elements that were controllable and others uncontrollable, with the controllable events likely to yield the greatest opportunities for improvement.

An additional factor was the legislation for the Referendum that provided for the Chief Counting Officer to be the Chair of the Electoral Commission with the Returning Officers of Local Councils being appointed as Regional and Local Counting Officers in their respective areas. The Regional Counting Officer for Yorkshire and the Humber was the Chief Executive and Returning Officer of Wakefield.

Members were advised that in May 2012, the Council would have its own Local Elections along with the Referendum on proposed changes to the Council's political governance arrangements. In addition there were proposals for the introduction of Elected Police Commissioners which may coincide with the local elections and referendum.

Key learning points for three areas were identified and outlined within paragraph 8 of the report.

Members felt that although the elections were a success, concern was raised with regard to the length of time counting staff were at the count and whether adequate refreshments and breaks were provided. It was reported that breaks and refreshments were made available but it was noted that there were insufficient numbers of counting staff for the returns received and this had been identified as a learning point.

RESOLVED that the report be approved and the views and comments from the members be taken on board for the future.

5. ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12.

The Committee considered a report on the key issues that would form the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year.

Details of the Committee's indicative Work Programme for 2011/12 were set out within the report and Members noted that the main focus for the Committee for the year would be on two key areas of work:-

- a. receiving regular updates on preparations for holding a Referendum to decide the future governance arrangements in Doncaster, in accordance with the resolution passed by Full Council in March 2011; and
- b. considering the findings and recommendations arising from a Polling District Review. There was a statutory requirement for the Council to conduct a review of polling districts and polling places every 5 years. A review was due again this year and must be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 in order to meet this requirement.

Members were advised that once the work programme was agreed, there would still be some degree of flexibility in terms of varying the business to be considered at each meeting of the Committee, in order to accommodate any unforeseen matters or changing priorities that may occur during the year.

With regard to the documentation used for the Mayoral system, it was suggested that the language used needed to be clear to ensure that the electorate understood what they were voting for. It was suggested that the proforma should be brought to the Committee for Member comments prior to publication. It was reported that the Council had delegated this responsibility to the Chief Executive. It was also noted that all the documentation used would be vetted by Communications Team.

RESOLVED that the draft work programme for 2011/12 as detailed within paragraph 4 of the report be approved.