

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

**COMBINED LOCAL ELECTIONS, PROPOSED REFERENDUM ON CHANGE OF
GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND POSSIBLE POLICE AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS 3RD MAY 2012 – PREPARATION**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The combined elections and referendum on 5th May 2011 created a number of issues which have been raised at Council and discussed at the last meeting of the Committee when an evaluation report was considered. Preparations are now being commenced for next year's elections to minimise the potential impact of the additional dimensions which will arise from the likelihood that there will be a local referendum and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in addition to the Local Elections. The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity to consider ongoing preparations in anticipation of the forthcoming elections.

RECOMMENDATION

2. The Committee is asked to consider and approve the report subject to any comments it wishes to make.

BACKGROUND

3. There is an increasing expectation that elections will be combined and whilst this was previously limited generally to two significant elections at the same time this has changed and it is likely that 3 or more elections or referenda could be held on the same day. This has significant management implications not least because many activities are statutory in nature and must be completed by or before a particular date or time.
4. At its meeting on 6th July 2012, this Committee considered a report evaluating the combined local election and Referendum on the Voting System to be used at Parliamentary General Elections. Learning points from that election and the subsequent views and comments from Members will usefully inform the planning for May 2012 and subsequent elections. Preparations for next year will need to include provision for the Council's Annual Elections, a possible Referendum on the Council's Governance Arrangements and the proposed Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners.
5. The arrangements for elections and referendum [once approved] are prescribed

by statute and must be carried out in accordance with those requirements. Members will be familiar with the requirements and arrangements for the local Elections but an update on the position in respect of both the Referendum and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections is given below: -

- Following the Council's decision that it wished to hold a referendum, further work has been undertaken including the drafting of consultation documentation. To ensure that the proposed action and the consultation material comply with legislation, Counsel's opinion has been sought. Counsel has advised that the requirement to consult includes consulting on whether a referendum should be held and the Council will need to consider further and take any responses into account before finally deciding whether to proceed with a referendum. This will be explained in more detail in a report being prepared for consideration by Council at its meeting on the 15th September 2011.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections are expected to be implemented in May 2012 under provisions contained within the Localism Bill. Whilst the House of Lords voted against the introduction of elected Police Commissioners in May 2011, there is an expectation that legislation will be in place in time for the election of Police Commissioners to take place alongside the local elections in May 2012. A supplementary vote system similar to that used for Mayoral Elections is likely to be utilised. Parliamentary delays do mean, however, that there is still some uncertainty around how the elections will be conducted. although it is expected that Barnsley will take the lead for the region.

6. The Electoral Administration Act 2006 requires that every five years a review is undertaken of Polling Districts and Polling Places used for Elections and that new Personal Identifiers (the security information to prevent fraud provided by voters) are collected for absent voters. Following the implementation of the legislation a further review of polling arrangements will need to be completed by the 31st December 2011, although the effective date will need to be the 1st December 2011 to coincide with the publication of the Electoral Register as any changes to polling districts will also affect the Register. The renewal of Personal Identifiers will commence in January 2012.
7. Notice of the Polling Review has been given with Members and others being notified and asked to raise any issues so that these can be taken into account as part of the review. Once the review has been completed there will be a formal consultation with an opportunity to comment further on the proposed arrangements. A particular target for this year has been a reduction in the use of portable units in order to improve facilities for both voters and staff and reduce costs.
8. The renewal of Personal Identifiers must commence in January 2012. At the end of this month all absent voters, whose Personal Identifiers are more than five years old, will be sent a letter requesting that they provide new Identifiers. Non responders will be sent a reminder before having their postal vote cancelled. This initial renewal of identifiers will affect approximately 17500 absent voters.

9. Although the Polling Review and the collection of new Personal Identifiers are not directly associated with the delivery of the election itself, they have a direct impact and facilitate voting for electors.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

10.

Priority Theme	Mayor's Priorities for 2011/12	Implications of this initiative
1. Creating a strong, connected and inclusive economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive forward the Doncaster economy • Get the balance of public and private transport right • Promote Doncaster as a tourist destination • Regenerate Doncaster's town centres 	The democratic process has direct implications for the Mayoral Priorities.
2. Developing stronger communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage community harmony and cohesion. Treat people as individuals, not by reference to labels and artificial groupings 	See Note above
3. Increasing and improving housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise housing standards 	See Note above
4. Protecting and improving all our children's lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve education and skills • Build on a strengthening Children's Service 	See Note above
5. Improving health and support for independent lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage attitudes of self-reliance, self-improvement and mutual respect within Doncaster communities 	See Note above
6. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime and all forms of anti-social behaviour 	See Note above
7. Creating a cleaner and better environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to protect the environment from developers, decay and architectural vandalism 	See Note above
8. Internal Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure local people get value for money from council services 	See Note above

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

11. The delivery of an election is a significant and complex undertaking with strict statutory deadlines. Preparation and planning are key components to reducing or eliminating risks.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The issues contained in this report are covered by provisions contained within the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended), The Local Government Act 2000 (as amended), The Electoral Administration Act 2006, The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, and The Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2007. In addition, proposals relating to the Police and Crime Commissioners are contained in the Localism Bill with the likelihood that there will be further subordinate legislation giving the detailed provisions for the conduct of the elections.
13. The arrangements for three combined elections are likely to be complex and involve a need for further legislative provisions. The Committee will be advised of any significant changes or implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The cost of the District Election and proposed Referendum would be met by the Council, whilst funding for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections would be met separately. The combination of the elections and the sharing of costs will reduce the overall cost burden of the elections to all parties. Provision has been made within the 2012 budget for the cost of the Local election.

CONSULTATION

15. Consultation is not generally undertaken in connection with elections, however activities will be undertaken at a national and local level to raise awareness and promote participation. Specific consultation will be undertaken with the electorate and any interested persons prior to any final decision by the Council over whether to hold a referendum. Consultation is also undertaken as part of the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTORS

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

File – Local Elections – 5th May 2011

**ROB VINCENT
RETURNING OFFICER AND
LOCAL COUNTING OFFICER**