

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

29TH NOVEMBER, 2011

A meeting of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the MANSION HOUSE, DONCASTER on TUESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER, 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Chair – Councillor Kevin Rodgers
Vice-Chair Councillor Moira Hood

Councillors Patricia Bartlett, Joe Blackham, Cliff Hampson, Rachel Hodson, Bill Mordue and Sue Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor John McHale.

9. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST, IF ANY

No declarations were made at the meeting.

10. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH SEPTEMBER, 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee held on 13th September, 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Committee considered a report which outlined proposed changes to polling places arising from a review that was currently being carried out. It was noted that the relevant legislation required that reviews must be undertaken every four years, and as the last review had been conducted in 2007, it was now necessary to carry out a further full review to be completed by 31st December 2011. It was reported that given the relatively short period of time since the last review, at which time a number of changes were made to polling districts, it was not felt necessary to recommend any further changes to polling districts in this review.

In presenting the report, the Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal explained that the review had focussed, in particular, on identifying alternative venues, where available, to avoid the use of schools and costly portable units.

After Members had commented/asked questions on specific polling place venues listed in the Appendix to the report, and the Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal had confirmed that the review proposals would be circulated to all Ward Members over the next month and any comments/observations from Members taken into account as part of the review, it was

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to polling premises as detailed in the report be noted.

12. PROPOSED ELECTORAL REVIEW BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND IN JUNE 2013

The Committee considered a report which outlined the circumstances regarding the proposed inclusion of a review of the Council by the Local Government Boundary Commission in its 2013 work programme which was announced recently by the Mayor. It was reported that the Mayor had an aspiration to reduce the number of Councillors on the Council, and that this could only be achieved as part of a wider electoral review. The Mayor had met with the Boundary Commission to discuss his proposals. Subsequently, the Commission had indicated that it would provisionally schedule a date in 2013 for carrying out a review in the Borough. It was noted that a statutory process would need to be followed if a review was implemented, and the Council would have to produce detailed proposals which would require significant input by the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee.

General discussion followed, during which Members asked various questions about the proposed review and how this would be undertaken. The Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal explained that the review would not be carried out with any preconceived notions with regard to an appropriate ratio of Councillors per number of electors in the Borough. The review, which would focus solely on the Doncaster Borough, would have the objective of achieving good local governance and would consider the number of Councillors needed to achieve this effectively. In carrying out the review, the Commission would take into account a wide range of factors such as the electoral cycle and number of wards in the Borough, together with the views of the Mayor and all Elected Members.

In response to a further question, the Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal confirmed that the Boundary Commission would expect to see some demonstration of support for the review from within the Council before any work was undertaken, and that a review

would not commence until all issues around the proposed referendum on the Council's governance arrangements were resolved.

With regard to the frequency in which reviews took place, the Head of Electoral Services and Democratic Renewal explained that in the past periodic boundary reviews were supposed to take place approximately every 10 years. However, the Boundary Commission now undertook an approach which involved a rolling programme of reviews ensuring that reviews took place on a regular cycle.

After Members had discussed other issues including the review recently carried out in Stoke, and noted that an electoral review could theoretically result in an increased number of councillors in the Borough, depending on the findings, it was

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.