

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

**COMBINED LOCAL ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUM ON CHANGE IN
GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – 3RD MAY 2012 – PROGRESS REPORT**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Local Elections and Referendum to decide whether the Council should change its Governance arrangements will take place on the 3rd May 2012. The purpose of this report is to provide information on progress that has been made in the preparation for the elections.

RECOMMENDATION

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

BACKGROUND

3. The Council had previously taken a decision to hold a Referendum allowing people to make a further choice on whether the Council should continue to operate a Mayor and Cabinet model or should change to a Leader and Cabinet model in September 2007. The passing of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 prevented this referendum taking place by extending the period between referendums on Governance arrangements from five to ten years. Following this the Council determined that it would hold the referendum at the end of the revised moratorium period.
4. In 2011 the Council took a decision in principle to hold a referendum in May 2012 and began the process for implementing this, including public consultation taking the final decision to hold the referendum at the Council meeting on the 19th January 2012 and reconvened meeting on the 1st February 2012.
5. The organisation of a combined election creates additional complexities over the organisation of a single election and it will be essential to take these issues into account as part of the planning process.

6. The legislation provides detailed provision for the elections and the referendum. The referendum will be conducted under the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012 which will also apply to the Mayoral referendums being conducted in the major cities. These authorities are working closely to ensure consistency of approach and Doncaster has also been invited to participate where we have been able to make positive contributions by having already prepared solutions.
7. The cost of combined elections is shared where facilities are used for both elections e.g. polling stations. This is on an actual cost basis usually where there are two elections taking place this will be 50%. In addition there are some costs which will be solely attributable as additional costs to the referendum including ballot papers, and publicity and promotional costs to communicate the referendum
8. Planning is underway to put in place all the usual arrangements for polling stations; issue and opening of postal votes; nominations; the verification and count along with the numerous other arrangements that are necessary for the conduct of a successful election.
9. In addition the collection of updated personal identifiers for postal voters is also taking place. The initial 16500 requests have been sent with 12500 responses returned. All voters (4000) who did not respond to the initial request have now been sent a reminder letter however the requirements for the renewal of reminders means that any postal voter who does not respond by the 12th March 2012 will have their postal vote cancelled and will need to vote in person at the polling station.
10. A key consideration will be the verification and count which will be more time consuming and complicated because of the combination of the Local Elections and Referendum. Taking account of these additional requirements and to ensure the security of the poll, particularly in relation to postal voting, it is proposed that the verification of ballot papers for both the elections and referendum will take place on Thursday night following the close of polls and the counting of votes will be undertaken on the morning of Friday the 4th May 2012.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11. The elections and referendum are a statutory duty and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OBJECTIVES

12.

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 a cross cutting impact on the Council's 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 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
3. Increasing and improving housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise housing standards and ensure that there are enough homes to suit all requirements 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
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 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
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 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
6. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime and all forms of anti-social behaviour 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
7. Creating a cleaner and better environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to protect the environment from developers, decay and architectural vandalism 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.
8. Internal Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure local people get value for money from council services 	The democratic process has a cross cutting impact on the Council's priorities.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

13. The delivery of an election is a significant and complex undertaking with strict statutory deadlines. Planning is a key component in reducing or eliminating risks.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The provisions for the conduct of the Local election are contained in the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, and the Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012. These regulations set detailed requirements for the conduct of the elections and referendum subject to the requirements of primary legislation. In addition the authority has a statutory duties relating to the provision of resources to the Returning Officer for the resources conduct of the Local Elections under section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The budget for the cost of the Local elections (including Registration) in 2012/13 is £665,000. A further provision of £125,000 has been made available in the 2012/13 budget for the cost of the Referendum.

CONSULTATION

16. Consultation is not undertaken in connection with elections however activities will be undertaken at a national and local level to raise awareness and promote participation. Consultation has been undertaken in the stages leading up to the Council's decision whether a referendum should be held.

REPORT AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTORS

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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