

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update to Members on preparations for Parliamentary, General and Local Government Elections in May 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. 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?

3. Having accessible and well organised elections is key to public engagement in the democratic process. We also have all out local and parish elections for the first time with new ward boundaries. The public will be able to vote for 2 or 3 candidates in the borough election rather than the previous practice of electing a single candidate in rotation. Where possible, we are looking for alternative venues to schools for polling stations in order to avoid the disruption that can be inevitably caused by closing the school for the day.

BACKGROUND

4. The Terms of Reference of this Committee provide for taking an overview of Electoral Services issues. Set out below is the current position in respect of recent and current activity.

PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS

5. The Returning Officer has scheduled regular meetings with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Electoral Services Manager, Head of Communications and other key officers.
6. There will be 3 separate Election Counts which will take place at Doncaster Racecourse as follows:-
 - Thursday 7th May, 2015 following the close of Poll – verification of all ballot papers for the parliamentary, Local and Parish Elections followed by the counting of the Parliamentary ballot papers.
 - Friday 8th May, 2015 at 2.00pm – Counting of Local ballot papers.
 - Saturday 9th May 2015 at 11.00am – Counting of Parish ballot papers.

7. Arrangements for appointing staff are well advanced. As far as possible, staff that we employed on polling stations will not be engaged on the Thursday evening Count but will be asked to work on the Friday and Saturday as required. We are fully staffed for everything apart from the Thursday evening Count and will further promote the opportunity internally and encourage applications from staff.
8. At the Count on Friday 8th May 2015, it is proposed that the newly Elected Councillors will sign their 'Acceptance of Office'. In line with the Local Government Act 1972, all newly Elected Councillors shall take up their appointment from Monday 11th May, 2015 and any outgoing Councillors shall retire from Sunday, 10th May, 2015.
9. Following the Polling Districts and Polling Places review, all Polling Stations have been reviewed and booked as required including the following eight new ones:-
 - Central Ward – Quakers House has been designated as the new polling place for polling district BA replacing Stirling Primary School so the School can remain open.
 - Town Moor Ward – Doncaster School for the Deaf has been designated as the new polling place for polling district CG replacing The Studio as the premises are up for sale.
 - Edlington and Warmsworth Ward – St John the Baptist Church has been designated as the new polling place for polling district HA replacing Edlington Victoria Primary School so the school can remain open.
 - Torne Valley Ward – Tickhill Parish Rooms has been designated as the new polling place for polling district IC replacing Tickhill Estfeld Primary School and the Scout Hut has been designated as the new polling place for polling district ID replacing Tickhill St Mary's Primary School so both schools can remain open.
 - Finningley Ward – a portable unit has been designated as the new polling place for polling district KH replacing 1 Nether Cantley Lane as the private house is no longer suitable. A site visit has taken place and no other suitable polling place was identified.
 - Hatfield Ward – East Doncaster Development Trust has been designated as the new polling place for polling district LD replacing Crookesbroom Primary School so the School can remain open.
 - Stainforth & Moorends Ward – Moorends Miners Welfare & Community Development Centre has been designated as the new polling place for polling district RJ and RK replacing West Road Primary School so the School can remain open.

Since the review a further two new stations have been identified and confirmed:

- Sprotbrough Ward – Sprotbrough Children’s Centre has been designated as a polling place for polling district TQ replacing Sprotbrough Youth Centre as the building is not currently in use.
 - Stainforth & Moorends Ward – Moss and Fenwick Village Hall has been designated as the new polling place for polling district RF replacing The Baxter Arms Public House which was a temporary Polling Station until the new Village Hall was built.
10. The review was undertaken in a timeframe stipulated by Statute. Whilst the review was before the new Ward boundaries had been confirmed, we were aware of the proposed changes and regard was had to the changes when reviewing the existing provision. On the 2nd February 2015 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England gave notification of the publication of the electoral changes order. All other polling places remain unchanged. Polling districts and polling places are kept under regular review. The next full review of polling districts and polling places will take place in four years’ time.
 11. The Register of Electors including the new Boundary changes was published on the 2nd March 2015 and Members can apply for a copy by completing the Register Request Pro-forma which was previously circulated by the Electoral Services team or alternatively by contacting Electoral Services directly for a copy.
 12. Nomination Packs for candidates will be available from Friday 27th March.
 13. A District and Parish prospective candidate and agents meeting has been scheduled for 2.00pm on Friday 27th March in the Council Chamber, to discuss the nomination, delivery dates of postal votes and an overview of the election process. Nomination Packs will also be distributed at this meeting.

A further meeting has been scheduled for nominated candidates and their agents at 2.00pm on Friday 10th April in the Council Chamber (the day after close of nominations) to discuss election detail such as the counts and postal vote procedures.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

14. All of the above are statutory duties and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. This report is primarily for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY PRIORITIES

15.

	Priority	Implications
	We will provide strong leadership and governance, working in partnership.	By ensuring the necessary arrangements are in place to deliver well-run elections and improving our reputation by meeting the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

16. Sufficient resources will need to be made available to run the combined Elections 2015 and to implement individual registration in order to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties detailed above.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. 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
- Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18. The Cabinet Office has supplied additional funding for the transition to IER:

- The costs and shared costs arising from the Parliamentary election will be claimed from Government.
- The costs and shared costs arising from the parish elections will be reclaimed from the parish.
- The review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations was carried out within existing budgets.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous EDSC reports

Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

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