

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2016

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the 007 B - CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 15TH MARCH, 2016, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Phil Cole
Vice-Chair - Councillor James Hart

Councillors Pat Haith, Charlie Hogarth, John McHale, Jane Nightingale, Kevin Rodgers, Clive Stone and Sue Wilkinson

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sean Gibbons and Majid Khan

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

12 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24TH NOVEMBER 2015

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24th November, 2015 be approved as a correct records and signed by the Chair.

13 ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES

The Committee received a report updating Members on the preparations for Police and Crime Commissioner Election on 5th May, 2016 and the EU Referendum on 23rd June, 2016. Details of those preparation were outlined within paragraphs 5 to 14 of the report.

Members were also advised that a new application had been launched called 'Find my Polling Station' which had proved to be very useful. The link to the application would also be available via the Council Website and attached to the EU Referendum Poll Cards. It was noted that the link would also be forwarded via email to all Members following the meeting.

Following the update, Members raised queries with regard to the following:-

- What the deadline was for requesting postal votes – It was advised that this information would be emailed to Members following the meeting

- Whether the Polling Station names could be added to the E-Register – It was noted that this had been requested with Express and confirmation would be sought following the meeting.
- Clarity was sought as to why the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) ballot couldn't be counted on the Thursday night. It was advised that Sheffield and Rotherham Councils Authorities were having all out Local elections and Barnsley were electing one third of their local members and so would have to spread their elections resources. Inevitably verification and counting will take longer in those authorities than in Doncaster. It was noted that once the ballot was verified, staff would be allowed to leave.
- Clarity was sought regarding who would be allowed to attend the EU Referendum Count and whether any discretion could be made to invite Councillors. It was advised that Leeds Council would determine attendees and the question of attendance of Councillors would be put to them and Members would receive a response in due course.

The Chair and Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to Trina Barber as Interim Team Leader for her fantastic performance and the Elections Team for all their efforts.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14 INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (IER) PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report updating Members on Individual Electoral Registration, annual Canvass and the publishing of the full register on 1st December, 2015.

The current position in respect of the recent and current activity was identified within paragraphs 5 to 9 of the report. Members were also presented with a breakdown of the current electorate compared to the published register from 1st December, 2015 which identified a further increase.

Following the introduction of the report, Councillor John McHale commended Trina Barber and the Elections Team for their performance and the way in which the reports were presented using Pie-Charts and Graphs which provides the information to Members at a glance.

Clarity was sought with regard to empty properties and new build properties and whether any progress was being made to occupy the properties and get them onto the register. It was advised that the Empty Properties team do provide records and the team were kept informed of these. It was also noted that the Team also liaise with Council Tax with regard to empty properties. It was suggested that further information be sought and forwarded to Members following the meeting. The Chair also asked whether the team were able to provide an estimate of turnover on how many people were new to the electorate for each ward.

In relation to schools and colleges, it was advised that the Team were speaking to schools and seeking agreement to place advertisement within the registration documents and speaking to Children's Services who go out to schools to advise. The

Chair stated that the responses from schools/colleges had been disappointing to date but that perhaps they could be approached again in the future.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Committee considered a report which highlighted that on the 24th February, 2016, the independent Boundary Commission for England began redrawing the map of parliamentary constituency boundaries in England taking information from the published register of electors on 1st December, 2015.

Following the publication of the register on the 1st December, 2015, Doncaster's electorate stood at 216,798. However, the Boundary Commission did not include the EU Nationals which meant that they all fell under the minimum requirement. However, this was not to say that Doncaster would lose an MP, it could mean that our boundaries are extended out of Doncaster to increase the number of electors within the constituency to meet the requirements or to make up another constituency to another borough.

It was reported that the Boundary Commission were currently looking at initial proposals which were expected to be published in September, 2016. The publication of those proposals would commence a 12 week consultation period during in which they would invite comments on the proposals to capture the views and knowledge of local residents. It was noted that the Commission must make its final recommendations to Parliament in 2018. Members would be provided with further information when it was available.

A brief discussion took place on what could be envisaged for Doncaster but it was felt that it would be better to wait for the further information before making any comments. The Chair highlighted that the process was the same as the previous review and the Boundary Commission would take into account similar communities. It was also suggested that regions could be broken down into sub-regions to make areas more manageable but this may also limit the options of borrowing a ward.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.