

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2018

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held in Room 008 - CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2018, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Phil Cole.
Vice-Chair - Councillor Nick Allen.

Councillors Sean Gibbons, Pat Haith, Majid Khan, Sue McGuinness, Kevin Rodgers and Sue Wilkinson.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Hughes, Jane Nightingale and Tina Reid.

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

There were no declarations reported at the meeting.

12 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21ST NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st November, 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to Councillor Majid Khan's apologies being recorded for the meeting.

13 ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES

The Committee received a report informing Members of the up and coming election for a Mayor for the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority on the Thursday 3rd May 2018. The report provided a detailed update on the preparations undertaken so far for Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Combined Authority Mayoral Election. The Electoral Services Manager outlined to members the preparations for the elections which were as follows:-

- Dave Smith, the Chief Executive of Sheffield City Region would be the Returning Officer for the election, with Jo Miller as the Council's Chief Executive acting a Local Returning Officer in Doncaster;
- The verification and count of all ballot papers would take place on Friday 4th May 2018 at Doncaster Racecourse at 9.00 am. Arrangements for recruiting staff are well underway for all positions on polling stations, postal vote opening and count.

- All polling stations had been booked and confirmed. However, there was a requirement to change four polling stations due to the Tour de Yorkshire coming through the borough causing road closures with no alternative access into these polling stations at some point during polling day. There was also the need to change two other polling stations for reasons set out within the report. It was reported that the new polling stations would be highlighted on polling cards notifying those effected electors of a temporary change to their previous polling station on this occasion.
- It was also advised that Elected Members would be welcome to attend the count as observers.

A copy of the timetable of key dates was attached at Appendix A to the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14 INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a report from the Electoral Services Manager presenting Members with an update on a number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and Annual Canvass.

It was reported that the final response to the 'Household Enquiry Form' was 118,017 (85.70%) properties, which was slightly up on the past two years. A full breakdown by return method in comparison to 2015 and 2016 was attached at Appendix A of the report.

Members were advised that a proactive approach was required throughout the year and not just during the canvass period in order to maintain an accurate and complete register, ensuring as far as possible that all eligible persons were on the register and that all non-eligible persons were removed. Details of the initiatives being currently undertaken were presented within paragraph 6 of the report.

It was noted that as of the 1st March 2018, the full electorate was 222,937 and a full breakdown by ward was attached at Appendix B of the report.

Members wished to offer their thanks to the Elections Team for their professionalism and the impressive return rate.

With regard to houses on new developments, it was asked whether the team sent out registration packs. It was reported that's electoral services identified new homes but more often than not the houses were nowhere near completed or occupied. However, developers of new sites when contacted were willing to advise electoral services when houses become occupied. It was also noted that liaison with Planning and Council Tax continued to take place which had improved registration.

Discussion took place in relation to the pilot of additional photo identification for electors when attending the polling stations. Members were advised that a small number of Councils had agreed to pilot this at their May's elections. It was highlighted that there were so many unknowns and questions around procedures. It was also

noted that it was envisaged that there would be additional costs in relation to the supply of ID cards. Members noted that this proposal was a long way off national introduction. However further discussion on this matter could be set aside at a future meeting of the Committee if required.

A query was made in relation to the electorate within Armthorpe being lower than that being reported within the By-election report. It was advised that a number of these had now been removed but at the time of the By-election, it was agreed that these remain on the register to ensure they were able to vote.

In response to a query regarding listed properties, it was advised that the number had risen by more than 2,000 since 2016. In relation to absentee landlords, if any member had been made aware of landlords that should not be listed on the register at a property, then they could forward the information to the elections team who would investigate the matter.

A question was raised with regard to applications made via the website and how the person knows when the application has been accepted. Members were advised email notification was given supplying the person with a reference number. It was highlighted that the reference number wasn't matching and a change to the system now facilitates the team to search for that individual. Once an elector's details are verified by the Department for Work and Pensions the elections team would confirm by letter that the application had been successful.

The Chair and Members wished to express their thanks and congratulate the Elections Team on the hard work carried out to date.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15 BY-ELECTION UPDATE

The Committee received a report regarding the By-Election Update in Armthorpe. It was reported that due to the sad recent death of Cllr Tony Corden a vacancy occurred for a Ward Councillor within the Armthorpe Ward. A By-election was called by two local government electors to fill the vacancy by holding an election.

Members were advised that the election took place on Thursday 15th February 2018, there were two nominations received and Frank John Tyas was elected as a Councillor for Armthorpe with the results being as follows:-

Tyas, Frank John (Labour Party) 1431 votes
Williams, Martin (Independent) 466 votes

Members were presented with the breakdown of the votes which were also outlined within paragraph 5 of the report. It was also advised that a vacancy had also been advertised and called by ten electors for Bawtry Town Council. However, there was only one nomination received, therefore the election was uncontested and the candidate (Paul Muxlow) (Independent) was automatically elected.

Discussion took place in relation to Parish Council election being all postal votes. It was advised that although this hadn't been investigated, it was envisaged that there would need to be more planning in place for an all postal election and furthermore the

cost of the election would be more expensive which would be 100% cost to the Parish Council.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Prior to the closure of the meeting, Scott Fawcus, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services wished to share with Members that Trina Barber, Elections Services Manager had now completed all her election qualifications. The Chair and Members congratulated Trina and wished her well for the future.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____