



## Agenda

---

To all Members of the

# ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

**Notice is given that a Meeting of the above Committee is to be held as follows:**

**Venue:** Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

**Date:** Tuesday, 7th July, 2020

**Time:** 10.00 a.m.

The meeting will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. Members and Officers will be advised on the process to follow to attend the meeting. Any members of the public or Press wishing to connect to the meeting remotely should contact Governance Services on 01302 736709/737462/736712 for further details.

### BROADCASTING NOTICE

This meeting is being recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Council's web site.

The Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act and images collected during this recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Please be aware that by entering the meeting, you accept that you may be recorded and the recording used for the purpose set out above.

---

**Damian Allen**  
**Chief Executive**

---

Issued on: Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

Governance Services Officer for this meeting: Jonathan Goodrum, Senior  
Governance Officer. Tel. 01302  
736709

**Items for Discussion:****Page No.**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To consider the extent, if any, to which the public and press are to be excluded from the meeting.
3. Declarations of Interest, if any.
4. Minutes of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee Meeting held on 17th March 2020. 1 - 2
- A. Reports where the public and press may not be excluded.**
5. Council Decision Making Arrangements in the Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic. 3 - 10
6. Canvass Reform. 11 - 16
7. Electoral Services Update on Key Issues Report. 17 - 22

**MEMBERS OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE (11)****Chair** – Councillor Phil Cole**Vice-Chair** – Councillor Nick Allen

Councillor Steve Cox	Councillor Sean Gibbons
Councillor Pat Haith	Councillor Mark Houlbrook
Councillor Majid Khan	Councillor Jane Kidd
Councillor Kevin Rodgers	Councillor Derek Smith
Councillor Sue Wilkinson	

# Agenda Item 4.

## DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2020

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2020, at 10.00 am.

#### PRESENT:

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

Councillors Steve Cox and Pat Haith.

#### APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sean Gibbons, Mark Houlbrook, Kevin Rodgers, Derek Smith and Sue Wilkinson.

#### 12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

No declarations were made at the meeting.

#### 13 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2019 AND 27 JANUARY 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 26th November 2019 and 27th January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 14 ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES REPORT

The Committee received a report which provided an update on preparations for the Police and Crime Commissioner Election on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

In presenting the report, the Head of Service - Litigation and Regulatory, confirmed that much had changed since the report was published, with all elections being postponed until May 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This would make 2021 a particularly challenging year, due to the need to hold Mayoral, Borough and Parish Council elections all at the same time, in addition to the Police and Crime Commissioner election.

In the meantime, having sought advice, the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum due to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020 would still be going ahead, as the Government's emergency legislation in relation to the postponement of elections would not be introduced in time. Additional precautionary measures would be taken, such as the provision of hand sanitisers in the two Polling Stations. *[Note: Following this meeting, the Planning Referendum was subsequently cancelled due to the pandemic.]*

After Members had noted, with regard to the vacancy at Stainforth Town Council, that only one nomination had been received and therefore the election was uncontested and the candidate automatically elected, it was

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

15 RESULTS OF THE UK PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION 2019

The Committee received a report which outlined the results of the UK Parliamentary General Election held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019. A summary of the results, including the number of votes for each candidate, the rejected votes and the percentage turnout, was set out at Appendix A to the report.

It was reported that the calling of the General Election had come at a difficult time for the Electoral Services Team, when they were heavily engaged in the Annual Canvass and preparing to publish the revised Electoral Register. It also fell in the run-up to Christmas and at a time when some areas of the Borough were still beset by the November floods. Furthermore, the regular count venue at Doncaster Racecourse had been unavailable, so the alternative venue of the National College for High Speed Rail had been secured.

During subsequent discussion, Members of the Committee congratulated and thanked the Electoral Services Team and all staff involved for their efforts and excellent work, particularly given the short notice given in having to prepare for this election. Members felt that the alternative count venue had worked well under the circumstances and, as ever, it had been very smooth and efficient operation.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

CHAIR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



## Doncaster Council

### Report

---

7<sup>th</sup> July 2020

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

#### **COUNCIL DECISION MAKING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report provides an update to Members on the arrangements put in place and measures taken to date in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the Council's decision making processes have continued to operate effectively.

#### **EXEMPT REPORT**

2. N/A

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

3. 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?**

4. Ensuring that the Councils' democratic structures and decision making processes can continue to operate effectively under alternative arrangements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is key to maintaining public engagement and confidence in the democratic process.

#### **BACKGROUND**

5. The terms of reference of this Committee include the role of monitoring, reviewing and making recommendations on the operation of the council's decision-making structures. Set out below is a summary of the measures taken to date to ensure that the Council's decision making arrangements have been maintained despite the lockdown restrictions introduced across the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Legislative changes introduced as a result of COVID-19**

6. On 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020, new Regulations came into force as a result of the Coronavirus Act 2020, handing local authorities new powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology or by other remote means during the coronavirus pandemic. This was in recognition of the fact that it would be very difficult for local authorities to hold public meetings in person during this time, due to limits on public gatherings and the social distancing and self-isolation measures currently in place. These Regulations are time-limited and apply to local authority meetings held before 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
7. More specifically, the regulations removed existing requirements for local authorities to hold annual meetings this year, and allowed for all current appointments (i.e. Chairs and seats on committees and representation on outside bodies) to remain in place until May 2021. These measures were aimed at helping local authorities redeploy their resources to deal with the pandemic and ensure essential business continues whilst upholding democratic principles and protecting the health and safety of Members, officers and the public in line with official public health guidance.
8. It should be noted that the Regulations also stated that the term 'being present' at a meeting (with reference to the Local Government Act 1972), now includes access by remote means. Therefore, remote attendance by a Member at a virtual committee meeting is deemed to satisfy the requirement in relation to Members having to attend at least one meeting in a period of 6 consecutive 6 months under the Local Government Act 1972. It is recognised, however, that under the circumstances, it will not be possible for all Members to attend virtual meetings in the absence of Full Council meetings taking place, so the Monitoring Officer has written to all Members confirming that he will exercise the delegation given to him by Full Council to disregard the lockdown period when calculating *failure to attend* by any Member. The Monitoring Officer will notify Councillors at the point that this period concludes.

## **Council-side decision making (i.e. Full Council and Council Committees/Sub-Committees)**

9. Upon receipt of the new Regulations, following consultation with the Chair of Council, Councillor Linda Curran, it was agreed to postpone the Annual Meeting of Council which had been due to take place on 15<sup>th</sup> May until such time that it was deemed safe to convene it at the Civic Office. This was in acknowledgement of the fact that due to the large number of Members involved in a Full Council meeting, it would prove very challenging and impractical to attempt to convene the Council AGM by remote means.
10. However, a number of virtual meetings have now been successfully held using Microsoft Teams since the Regulations were introduced, including meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee, Planning Committee and Audit Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) has also been holding Scrutiny briefing meetings with Directors to address specific issues relating to the pandemic during this time and ensure Members are better informed. The first formal virtual meeting of OSMC is

due to take place on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. It is envisaged that meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels will also recommence over the course of the next couple of months initially using virtual means.

11. This move to virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams has not required a change to Council Procedure Rules. However, protocols and good practices are being developed as more meetings are held e.g. checking all Members can be seen and heard at the start of a meeting, ensuring microphones are muted when not speaking and using the “hand icon” to indicate a wish to speak. It has been noted that Teams “experience” can differ depending upon the device being utilised and functionality can vary for those members who choose not to utilise a council provided laptop.
12. The Council is not currently streaming its meetings live but allows the public to access meetings by contacting Governance Services officers in advance who can provide the necessary joining instructions. Meetings are also recorded and published on the Council’s website. When Council first considered the recording and subsequent publishing of meetings on its website in 2015 it agreed that any decision to live cast would need further approval by Council. In particular, some of the issues raised at that time are still relevant today and would need to be considered further e.g. the risks both reputational and financial for the Council as “publisher” of any remarks which may be defamatory, confidential or sensitive.

#### **Executive decision making (i.e. Cabinet Meetings and Individual decisions by Portfolio Holders)**

13. To a large degree, the ability of the Executive to make decisions has not been adversely affected by the COVID-19 situation. While Cabinet meetings were cancelled from late March onwards with the onset of the pandemic, decision making has continued where required, under the existing mechanisms for individual decision making by the Mayor and Cabinet Members. Some Councils struggled to make member decisions but that was not the “Doncaster experience”. Cabinet meetings have now resumed, with the first virtual Cabinet meeting taking place on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Members of the public and press may observe the meeting live.
14. As Members will be aware, the COVID-19 emergency has resulted in the need for a number of key decisions to be taken by the Mayor in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee under the ‘Rule 16’ special urgency provisions set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules within the Constitution. These decisions have been circulated to all Members for information in the usual way, and will be reported in due course to a future Full Council meeting, as required by the Constitution. These decisions were in direct response to the Covid-19 emergency. It is expected that usual adherence to Forward Plan rules and “call-in” protocols will be the norm moving forward.

#### **Outside Bodies Representation and Committee Memberships**

15. As provided for in the Coronavirus Regulations, due to the requirement to hold a Council AGM being removed this year, all current outside body appointments and Committee Memberships have automatically been rolled over from last year and will continue to be in place until May 2021, or such time as the Council holds its AGM, if sooner. Any Special Responsibility

Allowances will also continue to be paid to Members during this time. However, outside of the AGM, the Council Constitution already allows for in-year changes to be made by political groups in relation to committee Memberships by way of the Group Leader giving written notice to the Monitoring Officer, if they so wish. In relation to Executive appointments to outside bodies, the Mayor can also make in-year changes to these appointments at any time.

### Future Arrangements

16. It is envisaged that as lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted over the course of the coming months, there may be the potential for holding hybrid meetings, with some Members being physically present in a meeting room at the Civic Office, while others attend remotely via Microsoft Teams. The legality of holding hybrid meetings at the present time has been the subject of national discussions and Counsel's opinion has been sought by the Local Government Association, resulting in the view being taken that under the current legislation, holding a hybrid meeting would be unlawful as it would conflict with current health protection regulations and restrictions on public gatherings. However, this position may well be re-assessed over the coming months dependent upon any further relaxation of lockdown restrictions, but is likely to bring a new set of challenges when managing a meeting with some Members physically in the room whilst others are attending remotely.
17. Officers will continue to consult with Group Leaders and Members over the coming weeks as the pandemic situation evolves as regards the approach to take in relation to holding Council Meetings (including the AGM) and other Committees and Sub-Committees as the need arises. Support and assistance will also continue to be offered to Members to ensure they have the necessary equipment and information to enable them to participate fully in remote meetings.

### OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

18. Not applicable - this report is primarily for information only.

### IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

19.

Outcomes	Implications
<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity,</p>	

<p>where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that the Council's democratic structures and decision making processes continue to operate effectively throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in order to maintain public engagement and confidence in the Council's governance arrangements.</p>

## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

20. The holding of remote decision making meetings presents some challenges in terms of ensuring all participants/attendees, including officers, Councillors and members of the public can access the meetings over the internet or by dialing in from a phone. The necessary equipment, together with guidance and support, has been offered to Councillors by the ICT and Governance teams to ensure they have the means to participate remotely in meetings. The Governance team has also provided assistance to the public and the press wishing to observe/participate in remote meetings.
21. Whilst there are benefits in terms of enabling Councillors to attend meetings remotely additional Democratic Services and ICT officer support is required to ensure technical issues such as loss of connectivity are addressed and the business of the meeting is accurately recorded.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: NC Date: 19/6/20]**

22. Under powers provided by section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020, the Secretary of State introduced The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations"). The 2020 Regulations make temporary changes to existing legal requirements around local authority meetings and apply to meetings held before the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
23. In summary, the 2020 Regulations:
  - make provisions for remote access to meetings of local authorities by elected members, the press and the public;
  - enable local authorities to hold and alter the frequency and occurrence of meetings without requirement for further notice;
  - make provision for elected members to attend meetings remotely;
  - disapply the requirement to hold annual meetings; and
  - modify legislation relating to public and press access to information relating to decisions made by local authorities to enable such access to be available through remote means.
24. As referred to in the main body of the report, the legal position set out above may be subject to changes as further restrictions are lifted, such as the possibility of holding hybrid meetings.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

25. Financial implications have not been sought for this update paper.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

26. Human Resources implications have not been requested.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PW Date: 25/06/20]**

27. As outlined above, virtual meetings are successfully being held using MS Teams. As noted, the Teams functionality can vary depending on the device being utilised as newly updated features may not be rolled out by

Microsoft to all platforms at the same time. ICT will continue to provide and support the provision of council laptops to members and support them in the use of MS Teams, as needed. Although the Council is not currently live streaming meetings, the technology is in place to deliver this if needed in the future. ICT are also trialling new equipment to support hybrid meetings moving forward, if and when these become lawful.

## **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

28. Health implications have not been requested.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: AS Date 17/06/20]**

29. Remote meetings may provide improved access to meetings for members of the public who may not be able to travel to the Council's office.

## **CONSULTATION**

30. Consultation with Group Leaders and relevant Chairs of Committees has taken place in respect of making arrangements for convening virtual meetings as permitted under the new Regulations.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

31. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

Scott Fawcus  
Assistant Director -  
Legal & Democratic Services  
Tel: 01302 734640  
E-mail: [scott.fawcus@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:scott.fawcus@doncaster.gov.uk)

Jonathan Goodrum  
Senior Governance Officer  
Tel. 01302 736709  
Email: [jonathan.goodrum@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.goodrum@doncaster.gov.uk)

Andrew Sercombe  
Governance & Member Services Manager  
Tel. 01302 734354  
Email: [andrew.sercombe@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.sercombe@doncaster.gov.uk)

**Debbie Hogg**  
**Director of Corporate Resources**

This page is intentionally left blank



## Doncaster Council

### Report

---

7<sup>th</sup> July 2020

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

### **CANVASS REFORM**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report provides an update to Members on a number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and Annual Canvass.

#### **EXEMPT REPORT**

2. N/A

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. 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?**

4. Ensuring the Electoral Register is as up to date as possible and carrying out proactive electoral activity is key to public engagement to ensure residents are registered to enable them to vote when an election occurs.

#### **BACKGROUND**

5. Each year the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has a duty to carry out a full annual review of the Electoral Register by contacting all residential addresses to establish if the information currently held on the Electoral Register is complete and accurate, before publishing a new revised Electoral Register on the 1<sup>st</sup> December each year. This is called the Annual Canvass
6. Last year the Government consulted on changes to the Annual Canvass which would become 'Canvass Reform'. The UK Government's Canvass Reform statutory instrument was debated in Parliament on 31<sup>st</sup> October

2019, and signed by the Minister for the Constitution on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019. This means the reforms have formally become law in relation to the UK parliamentary register and the local government register in England.

7. The overall aim of canvass reform is to deliver a more efficient system by which Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) can maintain their electoral registers with no negative effect on citizens, or on the accuracy and completeness of the registers.

## **CANVASS REFORM**

### **Objective**

8. The intention is that the legislation governing the reformed annual canvass is less prescriptive and therefore more permissive than is currently the case.

The objectives of canvass reform are:

- to make the process simpler and clearer for citizens;
- for EROs to have greater discretion to run a tailored canvass which better suits their local area;
- to reduce the administrative burden on EROs and the financial burden on taxpayers;
- to safeguard the completeness and accuracy of the registers;
- to maintain the security and integrity of the registers;
- to include the capacity for innovation and improvement, with a model that is adaptable to future change.

The purpose of the reformed canvass of households will be the same as before, that is to find out:

- the names and addresses of persons who are entitled to be registered, but who are not already registered;
- those persons who are on the register, but who are no longer entitled to be registered at a particular address (normally because they have moved).

### **Summary**

9. The new canvass will incorporate a 'data step' at the outset of the process. This will inform the ERO, based on the data available to them, which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition, based on matching their data on the electoral register against national Government data and, where relevant, locally held data sources. Where the data the ERO holds on electoral register matches data in another reliable and accurate dataset, the ERO can have some confidence that the details they hold on their register remain accurate.

The ERO will then follow one of two routes for each property:

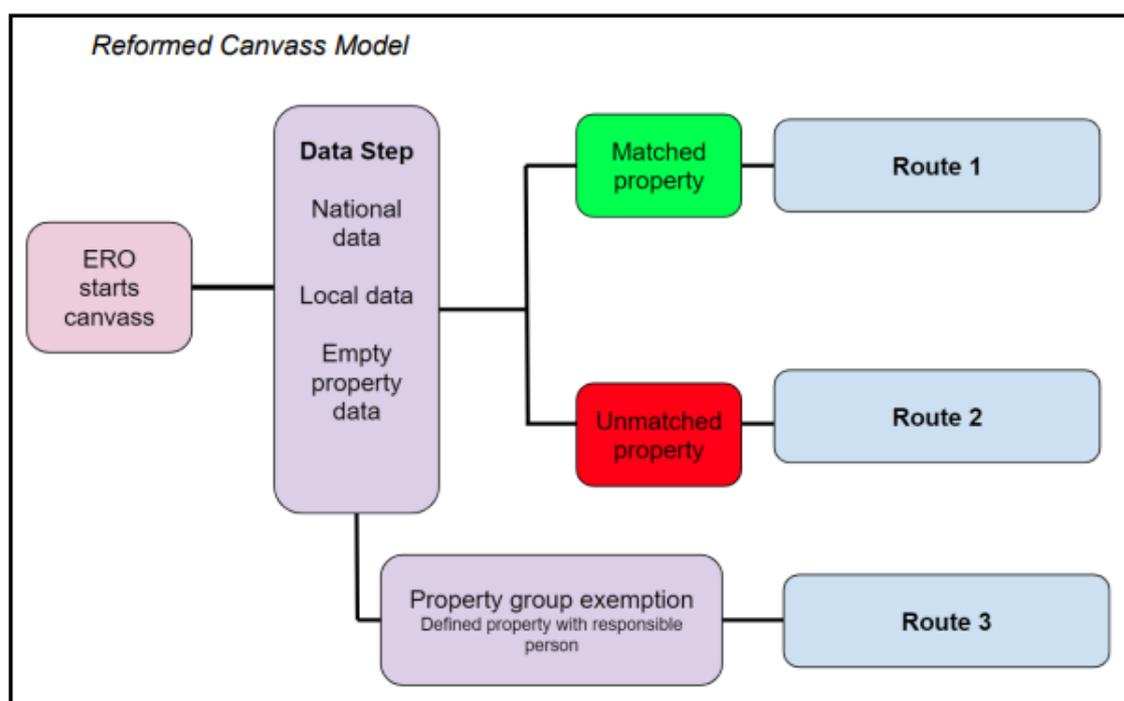
**Route 1** - the matched properties route, this will be used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition.

**Route 2** - the unmatched properties route, this will be used for properties where data matching has highlighted that there may be a change to the information the ERO currently holds for the property.

This will allow the canvass process to be streamlined for those households that have not changed since the previous year. It will enable the ERO to target their resources to where responses and updates to the electoral

register are believed to be required. The draft legislation clearly states that electors in both Route 1 and Route 2 properties will be contacted during the canvass to give them the opportunity to inform the ERO of any changes as needed, this means if all details are correct when we contact them they need only respond if there are any changes.

A third route, **Route 3** - the defined properties route, will be available for property types which do not fit clearly within Routes 1 and 2. The characteristics of these property types mean that the ERO can more effectively and efficiently obtain information on residents using an alternative approach, where they are able to identify a 'responsible person' to provide the information in respect of all residents. Examples of these property types are care homes and student halls of residence. Should the ERO be unable to successfully obtain information about the property from a 'responsible person' they will need to canvass these property types using the Route 2 process. Properties eligible for Route 3 will be identified at the start of the canvass process, but will not be exempted from the data match step



EROs will have the discretion to match the data they hold on registered electors against local datasets, in addition to matching against the national dataset. These local datasets might include council tax records, customer service records, registrar's data and other datasets held by the local authority. Local datasets are available to the ERO under their existing powers, provided by Regulations 23, 35 and 35A of the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001.

### **Statistics**

10. The National data matching process must take place between 1<sup>st</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 and Electoral Services carried out the National data match download on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020. There are currently 140,159 properties and 229,721 registered electors in Doncaster and 99,329 (70.85%) properties and 197,455 (85.95%) electors successfully matched from the initial National data matching download for Route 1. As of 25<sup>th</sup> June, Electoral Services had managed to match a further 10,997 properties and 13,310

electors using the Councils local datasets and will continue to request data to establish further matches at Route 1. At present, we are already at 110,326 (78.71%) of matched properties at the start of the Canvass compared to last year's annual canvass final return of 117,000 (84.20%) properties. There is likely to be less emphasis on the traditional canvass visits to elector homes due to Covid-19 with other forms of contact e.g. telephone being emphasised.

As a result of the Covid-19 situation, the Cabinet Office have indicated that they intend to bring forward new legislation to extend the deadline for Electoral Registration Officers to delay their publication of the revised annual Electoral Register from 1<sup>st</sup> December to the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, allowing more time and flexibility for EROs to conduct these canvass activities. The current Doncaster plan is to complete by 31 December 2020 given the election activity due to take place in 2021.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11. Electoral Registration is a statutory function and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. 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 OUTCOMES

13.

Outcomes	Implications
<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	<p>The Council has statutory duties to support elections</p>

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

14. Every effort is made to drive Individual Electoral Registration to ensure the Council meets the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards and complies with its legal duties.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF Date: 25/06/2020]

15. There are comprehensive statutory provisions covering the delivery of electoral registration activity.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PH Date: 25/06/2020]**

16. This work is funded from the Registration of Elections budget (NC003). The Cabinet Office also provides an annual funding contribution, this year's funding is £21,578 which is lower than past allocations but this is due to the expected savings from Canvass Reform.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

17. Human Resources implications have not been requested.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

18. Technology implications have not been requested.

## **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

19. Health implications have not been requested.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: TB Date: 24/06/2020 ]**

20. The Council has a duty to ensure all eligible electors can register to vote easily and are provided with several ways in order to do so. Registration information is also available in alternative languages, Braille and by video (YouTube) on the Council Web page.

## **CONSULTATION**

21. N/A

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

22. Electoral Commission - Delivering the Annual Canvass Guidance

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

Trina Barber  
Electoral Services Manager  
Legal & Democratic Services  
Tel: 01302 734398  
E-mail: [trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk)

**Damian Allen**  
**Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer**



## Doncaster Council

### Report

---

7<sup>th</sup> July 2020

#### 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 recent Electoral activities.

#### EXEMPT REPORT

2. N/A

#### RECOMMENDATION

3. 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?

4. Having accessible and well organised elections is key to public engagement in the democratic process.

#### BACKGROUND

5. The terms of reference of this Committee provide for an overview of Electoral Services issues. Set out below is the current position in respect of recent and current activity.

##### **2021 Elections**

6. The Election for a South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner which was due to take place on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 was postponed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic under the newly 'Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020'. This act also postpones any other scheduled May 2020 elections and any by-elections/referendums in England and Wales to May 2021. This includes the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum which was due to be held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

This will make 2021 a particularly challenging year, due to the need to hold Mayoral, Borough and Parish Council elections all at the same time, in addition to the Police and Crime Commissioner election and the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum.

7. Nationally there is a suggestion that there will be an increase in Postal Vote requests due to the pandemic. If that occurs in Doncaster there will be a requirement to process additional postal vote applications, printing and despatch pressures on our print provider and the processing and sorting of increased number of returned postal votes over a short period of time. Past elections have proved we have higher returns from postal voters compared to polling stations and an increase in the number of postal voters will therefore most likely lead to an increase in turnout.
8. All polling stations which were booked for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections have been postponed to next year. The Racecourse has been provisionally booked to undertake the counting of votes over four days. Plans are in place to start to carry out early recruitment and training should the need for social distancing still be in place more training sessions and contingency planning will be carried out and we will be advised by the Council's Director of Public Health on any necessary steps. Members of the Committee will recognise that this situation is fluid and that prior to May 2021 the requirements for Social Distancing and the impact and effect of Covid-19 may change further. Although there is much speculation around the potential impacts of Covid-19 on the 2021 election cycle, the legislative position is that these elections will occur. The Returning Officer and his staff will ensure that this committee are kept informed of any developments in this area as the year progresses.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

9. 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 OUTCOMES**

10.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better</li> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	<p>The Council has statutory duties to support elections.</p> <p>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.</p>

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

11. Sufficient resources will need to be made available to administer the Election in order to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties

detailed above.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF Date: 25/06/2020]**

12. 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
  - Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) (Postponement of Elections and Referendums) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PH Date: 25/06/2020]**

13. Any costs associated from the cancellation of the Police and Crime Commissioner Election or the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum will be claimed from Government and will not be a pressure on the Council's budget. Where possible anything that can be re-used when the election/referendum takes place have been kept.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14. Human Resources implications have not been requested.

#### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

15. Technology implications have not been requested.

#### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

16. Health implications have not been requested.

#### **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: TB Date 25/06/2020]**

17. The Council has a duty to ensure Elections are well managed to allow all eligible electors to freely vote by secret ballot ensuring freedom of expression and political debate by exercising their vote

#### **CONSULTATION**

18. N/A

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

19. Previous EDSC reports.

#### **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

Trina Barber  
Electoral Services Manager  
Legal & Democratic Services  
Tel: 01302 734398

E-mail: [trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk)

**Damian Allen**  
**Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer**

This page is intentionally left blank