

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER, 2021

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER, 2021, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Ian Pearson
Vice-Chair - Councillor Nick Allen

Councillors James Church, Gemma Cobby, Julie Grace, Jake Kearsley, Majid Khan, Thomas Noon and Andy Pickering

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Debbie Hutchinson and Emma Muddiman-Rawlins

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

No declarations were reported at the meeting.

8. MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13TH JULY 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Members were provided with an update in relation to Voter ID Cards, stating that Cabinet office had notified that the cards would not be issued by Electoral Services. This responsibility would fall to another department/team to be determined. It was also noted that it was hoped that the ID cards would be in use in time for the Parliamentary Elections in 2024. A trial would take place prior to this. A further update would be provided to Committee in due course.

In relation to the Boundary Commission consultation, Members were advised that an update on the proposals would be provided early next year.

9. BY-ELECTION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REFERENDUM UPDATE

The Electoral Services Manager provided members with detailed information and results of the Sprotbrough Neighbourhood Planning Referendum which took place on Thursday 15th July 2021.

The Neighbourhood Planning Referendum took place in the Central, East, Danum, Park and Stonecross Parish Wards.

It was noted that the outcome of the Referendum was in favour of using the Neighbourhood Plan for Sprotbrough to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area and the result was reported to Full Council on 23 September 2021.

Details of the High Melton Parish Council by-election which was held on the 5 November 2021 were also reported to Committee stating that as only one nomination was received, the election was uncontested and Martin Pick was automatically elected to the High Melton Parish Council.

RESOLVED that the reported be noted.

10. ANNUAL CANVASS UPDATE

The Committee were provided with an update on the number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and the Annual Canvass. It was noted that a revised version of the electoral register must be published by 1 December, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

Details of the routes that are followed by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) were noted as follows:-

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.

Route 3 – These properties are defined as Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO) all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants. It was noted that almost all had responded, there was one outstanding.

The Electoral Services Manager provided Members with the statistics for each of the three routes and these were identified at paragraphs 13-15 of the report. Further pro-active activity was also presented within paragraph 16 of the report. Members were advised that a further update on the canvass will be provided at the next meeting following its conclusion.

Following the update, the Electoral Services Manager answered a range of questions from Members including the following:-

- Councillor James Church asked whether the reform method had given the team any sense of whether it had worked much better and whether it had allowed them to concentrate more on Route 2 properties. In response, members were advised that this had been the case. In terms of this year, it has allowed the team to focus more on route 2 properties, identifying areas where previously they had been unable to get responses. It has helped the team to compare data and provide a better understanding of the background storey in relation to the properties.
- In response to a question regarding the number of staff employed to carry out the canvass, it was reported that there were 25 currently employed, which is a smaller amount on previous canvasses. However, there are less properties. Whilst Covid has had an impact on the numbers, this was not only the reason. It was also noted that this was supplemental work to their primary employment and staff were paid on results.

- In response to a question relating to HMO's, Members were advised that HMO's would fall within Route 3 properties. It was noted that the team had built up good relationships over the years with key holders, which has enabled staff to enter properties much easier to gain the information from residents. Owners had also arranged to meet canvass staff at the building in order for them to gain access.
- The Chair, Councillor Pearson asked whether relationships had been built with landlords of HMO's. In response, it was advised that the team did not have those relationships with landlords. However, the team work closely with St Leger Homes who provided help with new tenant information. The Team also work closely with colleagues in the Council Tax team.

In conclusion, the Chair made a suggestion that the team explore building relationships with the number of large social landlords that operate within the borough.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____