

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2022

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the CIVIC OFFICE on TUESDAY, 8TH FEBRUARY, 2022, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors James Church, Gemma Cobby, Jake Kearsley, Emma Muddiman-Rawlins, Thomas Noon and Andy Pickering.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Julie Grace, Debbie Hutchinson and Majid Khan

11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

No declarations were reported at the meeting.

12 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November, 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 2022 ELECTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report updating Member on the forthcoming South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Elections on Thursday 5th May 2022. It was noted that this would be the second a Mayor will be elected for a four year term.

Preparations for the elections were outlined at paragraphs 10 to 15 of the report. In terms of polling stations for the elections attached to the report at Appendix A provided a draft list which was currently under review. It was reported that once all suitable arrangements have been sourced, members would be notified of the final proposals. A copy of the timetable of key dates was also provided at Appendix B to the report.

Members were also notified of a By-Election at High Melton Parish Council. Details of the preparations were highlighted at paragraph 16 of the report and if contested the election would take place on Thursday 17th March 2022.

In addition to the By Election, it was notified that the Rossington Neighbourhood Planning Referendum had also been scheduled to take place on the 17th March 2022. Details of the preparations were outlined within paragraph 17 of the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

14 ANNUAL CANVASS OUTCOME

The Committee were provided with an update on the final outcome of the Annual Canvass and a detailed breakdown of the statistics for each Route.

Members were advised that the overall response rate for all three Route properties including those that did not need to respond was 91.85%, which was slightly down on previous years. However, due to Covid a foot canvass was not carried out the previous year so this was not a true comparison.

It was noted that the revised full annual Electoral Register was published on December 1st to meet the Electoral Registration Officer's statutory duty and the new electorate as of the 1st December 2021 was 227,875 electors which had risen by 2,678 since the start of the canvass. A detailed breakdown by ward including postal votes breakdown was provided at Appendix A to the report.

In terms of the annual absent voters refresh detailed at paragraph 17 of the report, it was noted that letters and forms had been sent to 5,287 electors in Doncaster who are due to refresh their signatures. It was advised that electors have six weeks to return their refreshed signature forms. However, should they not reply then the elector will lose their entitlement to vote by post and will need to re-apply should they wish to remain a postal voter.

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

Councillor James Church made reference to the financial implications from the Cabinet office and asked what they were and had the Council made any savings with the new reform procedures in terms of the canvass. It was reported that the Council would normally be provided with funding which would pay for the canvass, IER and registration. However, this year funding has not been provided as it was felt that because there was such a large number at the first stage, there was no requirement to follow up to 4 times. In terms of savings, it had saved significantly particularly in terms of printing and postage.

The Council are looking at the savings that had been made this year and what it has cost for the canvass. That information would be fed back and examined to see if there were any opportunities to receive funding. However, Members were advised that Councils had been advised that funding would not be provided going forward as they will be able to meet the costs of the canvass within its own budget allocated internally. It was advised that the Council were meeting the cost at present. However collating from the canvass was still being processed and meetings would be taking place with finance in due course to ensure that those costs can be met and there would not be a budget overspend. A further update would be provided at the next meeting.

The Chair, Councillor Ian Pearson highlighted that the electorate had risen and suspected that this was due to the new properties been built. He asked whether officers were aware if the electorate would continue to rise as a direct impact from new properties over the next 12 months. It was reported that officers were working with South and West Yorkshire and holding meetings with engagement officers and outreach workers and housing was one the links that were discussed. Information was being sought on new build projects and in terms of what stages they were at. It was

noted that Planning do provide elections with the information in terms of plots and the number of houses. However, information on the stages and when the properties become occupied was not available and work was continuing to seek that information. It was also noted that there were a number of agencies and partners involved in the meetings including Housing Associations and landlords that were discussed at the last meeting.

The Chair and Members thanked officers and all those who had contributed to the canvass.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____