

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 12TH JULY, 2022

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER DN1 3BU on TUESDAY, 12TH JULY, 2022, at 10.00 am.

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Julie Grace
Vice-Chair - Councillor Nick Allen

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

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Duncan Anderson, Debbie Hutchinson, Jake Kearsley and Majid Khan

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.

No declarations were reported at the meeting.

2 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8TH FEBRUARY 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th February, 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 2022 ELECTION RESULTS

The Committee received a report introduced by Scott Fawcus, Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services providing detailed information and results of the following elections, By-Elections and Referendums:

- Rossington Neighbourhood Planning Referendum held on 17 March, 2022.
- High Melton Parish Council By-Election held on 17 March 2022.
- Wheatley Hills and Intake ward By-Election held on 31 May 2022.
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (previously known as Sheffield City Region) held on 5 May 2022.

Following the update, officers answered a range of questions from Members including:-

In response to a question the Chair, Councillor Julie Grace raised regarding holding a number of elections on the same day, it was advised that it can be useful to combine polls but this was not always possible due to timescales.

With regard to the Rossington Neighbourhood Plan, Councillor Thomas Noon asked what the turnout was for a referendum. Officers advised that this tends to depend on the area, figures show that turnout was average hitting 10.9% however, some may be lower.

Councillor James Church asked whether there had been any issues raised by the public with regard to polling station changes. Members were advised that the Elections in 2021/22 there were a number of changes made with regard to polling stations, some of the third party stations had become inactivate and since Covid restrictions the team have tried not to use mobile stations. Officers advised that whilst no complaints had been sent to the team direct, a log book used by Inspectors on the day of elections was kept and any comments would be collated and used for the review of polling station exercise carried out by the team. It was suggested that if any member received any comments these could be passed to the team and fed into the process.

Further discussion took place with regard to polling stations and particular reference was made in relation to a station for Old Denaby, which was located on Church Street in Mexborough. Members were encouraged to share with the Elections team any local knowledge as to other available buildings which could be utilised as polling stations.

RESOLVED that the update report be noted.

4 ANNUAL CANVASS

The Committee received a report introduced by Scott Fawcus, Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and the preparation for the start of the Annual Canvass.

Following the update, Officers answered a number of questions including the following:-

In response to a question regarding costs for the canvass, Officers stated that this would depend on the responses received. A letter is sent to every property, costs are significantly reduced if the response rate is successful on the first contact, however costs can vary from year to year. It was also noted that the Annual Canvass was significantly more recognised by the electorate which had made the process more efficient and cheaper.

Members were also advised that more responses received at Route 1 stage through data matching would mean that costs were reduced as further canvass activities would not be required.

The Chair, Councillor Julie Grace sought clarification with regard to those nationalities who were unable to apply to go on the register and whether this effected the percentage of returns. It was advised that only UK, Ireland, Commonwealth and EU citizens were eligible to register, those nationalities such as Turkish are unable to register however, this would not affect the figures.

In terms of advertising, Councillor Noon asked whether further promotion could be carried out by using more social media platforms. Officers reported that the Communications Team undertake all the media advertisement and their thoughts were that Twitter would be the best media platform to use. It was suggested that Facebook

and other platforms were more directed to younger age groups. It was worth noting that there has been an uptake in all forms of registration and people seem to be more interested in registering particularly prior to elections.

In response to a question raised regarding relationships with social landlords, it was stated that this would be included in the communication process and following on from the earlier routes, a more targeted approach would be undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CHAIR: _____

DATE: _____