



**City of  
Doncaster  
Council**

Agenda

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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:** Council Chamber, Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, DN1 3BU

**Date:** Tuesday, 7th February, 2023

**Time:** 10.00 a.m.

**BROADCASTING NOTICE**

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**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.

**Damian Allen  
Chief Executive**

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Issued on: Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023

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

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4. Minutes of the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee Meeting held on 22nd November 2022.	1 - 8
<b>A. Reports where the public and press may not be excluded.</b>	
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**MEMBERS OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE (11)**

**Chair** – Councillor Julie Grace

**Vice-Chair** – Councillor Nick Allen

Councillor Duncan Anderson	Councillor James Church
Councillor Gemma Cobby	Councillor Debbie Hutchinson
Councillor Jake Kearsley	Councillor Majid Khan
Councillor Emma Muddiman-Rawlins	Councillor Thomas Noon
Councillor Andy Pickering	

# Agenda Item 4.

## DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2022

A MEETING of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE was held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICE, WATERDALE, DONCASTER DN1 3BU on TUESDAY, 22ND NOVEMBER, 2022, at 10.00 am.

#### PRESENT:

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

Councillors Duncan Anderson, James Church, Gemma Cobby, Debbie Hutchinson, Emma Muddiman-Rawlins, Thomas Noon and Andy Pickering.

#### APOLOGIES:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jake Kearsley.

#### 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

No declarations were made at the meeting.

#### 6 MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12TH JULY 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 7 ELECTIONS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided Members with detailed information and results from the by-election held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 for the Hatfield Town Council – Dunscroft Ward.

It was noted that turnout was 9.48%, and that Chris Taylorson (commonly known as Chris Taylo) had been duly elected with a total of 312 votes.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

#### 8 CANVASS UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided 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.

The Electoral Services Manager updated the Committee on the latest figures in relation to the responses received from properties in this year's canvass, broken down according to the three routes followed for each property, i.e. Route 1 (matched properties), Route 2 (unmatched properties) and Route 3 (Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO)). The Committee was reminded that as a result of the canvass reforms in 2020, only properties where all the electors could not be matched against national and/or local data were required to respond. The aim of the canvass reform was to deliver a more efficient system by which Electoral Registration Officers could maintain their electoral registers with no negative effect on citizens, or on the accuracy and completeness of the registers.

In answer to a question regarding the number of attempts made by canvassers when door knocking to make contact with residents, the Electoral Services Manager explained that canvassers were asked to make several attempts to make contact with residents. If they failed to obtain a response, canvass forms (open and not enveloped) were posted through the letter box in the hope that the resident would read it and respond knowing that the form had been hand delivered. This method had resulted in a number of responses being received.

The Electoral Services Manager explained, with regard to accessing HMOs, that these were often moved from Route 3 to Route 2, and that attempts were made to find out who the building key holders or supervisors were, especially for those HMOs that could only be accessed via a gated entrance, in order that canvassers could gain access. The local Royal Mail staff were also approached in some cases for advice on gaining access to HMOs.

In response to a question as to whether statistics were available on the response rates from HMOs, the Electoral Services Manager stated that it was not possible to separate out the statistics for HMOs from other properties, due to the fact that it was not always apparent from records that these properties were in fact HMOs until canvassers visited the property and they were also large in number. More accurate statistics on response rates were available for care homes because these were smaller in number (60) so it was possible to keep these on a separate spreadsheet from which reports could be generated.

With regard to communication, it was noted that the Electoral Commission ran national campaigns encouraging people to register online. The Commission also provided media pictures and posters which the corporate communications team used on the Council's various web and social media platforms to raise public awareness. The Council also sent out communications when the foot canvass was underway, so that residents were aware that canvassers might be visiting properties in the area.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

## 9 2023 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW PROPOSALS

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review proposals published by the Boundary Commission, which were out for final consultation with the public for the four week period from 8<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2022.

The Electoral Services Manager summarised the proposals affecting the three Doncaster constituencies, which were as follows:-

**Doncaster Central CC** (*proposed constituency name*)

- The name has changed back to the original current name of 'Doncaster Central' from the proposed 'Doncaster Town' due to Doncaster receiving City status.
- It resembles the current existing Doncaster Central constituency but without any part of the Stainforth & Barnby Dun ward.
- The proposal also contains all of the Tickhill & Wadworth ward, which is currently divided between constituencies.

<b>Doncaster Central CC</b>		
<b>Ward</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Electorate: 75,007</b>
Armthorpe	Doncaster	10,475
Balby South	Doncaster	6,813
Bessacarr	Doncaster	11,476
Edenthorpe & Kirk Sandall	Doncaster	7,937
Hexthorpe & Balby North	Doncaster	6,679
Tickhill & Wadworth	Doncaster	8,823
Town	Doncaster	11,001
Wheatley Hills & Intake	Doncaster	11,803

**Doncaster East and Axholme CC** (*proposed constituency name*)

- In Humberside and South Yorkshire they have changed a constituency that crosses the county boundary which is Doncaster and North Lincolnshire by combining the Isle of Axholme area of North Lincolnshire unitary authority with wards from the east of the Borough of Doncaster.
- The Thorne & Moorends ward is currently divided between the current existing Doncaster North and Don Valley constituencies, and they propose this ward now be included wholly within the proposed Doncaster East and Axholme constituency:

<b>Doncaster East and Axholme CC</b>		
<b>Ward</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Electorate: 70,113</b>
Finningley	Doncaster	13,806
Hatfield	Doncaster	11,576
Rossington & Bawtry	Doncaster	13,549
Thorne & Moorends	Doncaster	12,766
Axholme Central	North Lincolnshire	6,077
Axholme North	North Lincolnshire	6,436
Axholme South	North Lincolnshire	5,903

**Doncaster North CC** (*proposed constituency name*)

- The Stainforth & Barnby Dun ward is currently divided between constituencies and they propose that the existing Doncaster North constituency boundary be realigned to follow the ward boundaries, and include the whole of the Stainforth & Barnby Dun ward.

<b>Doncaster North CC</b>		
<b>Ward</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Electorate: 71,739</b>
Adwick le Street & Carcroft	Doncaster	11,505
Bentley	Doncaster	12,442
Mexborough	Doncaster	11,438
Norton & Askern	Doncaster	11,524
Roman Ridge	Doncaster	8,565
Sprotbrough	Doncaster	8,992
Stainforth & Barnby Dun	Doncaster	7,273

Two Doncaster wards; Conisbrough and Edlington & Warmsworth (20,565 electors) will move into a Rotherham Council constituency with a Rotherham Member of Parliament, we would therefore provide ballot papers to Rotherham council for those wards when a parliamentary election takes place:

**Rawmarsh and Conisbrough CC** (*proposed constituency name*)

- They propose to group the remaining Borough of Doncaster wards (Conisbrough, and Edlington & Warmsworth) with the Borough of Rotherham wards to form a Rotherham Constituency and propose the constituency be called Rawmarsh and Conisbrough.

<b>Rawmarsh and Conisbrough CC</b>		
<b>Ward</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Electorate: 70,272</b>
Conisbrough	Doncaster	12,240
Edlington & Warmsworth	Doncaster	8,325
Bramley & Ravenfield	Rotherham	7,207
Hooper	Rotherham	9,504
Kilnhurst & Swinton East	Rotherham	6,204
Rawmarsh East	Rotherham	6,879
Rawmarsh West	Rotherham	6,880
Swinton Rockingham	Rotherham	6,336
Wath	Rotherham	6,697

In response to a question regarding the logistics of running elections in the constituencies that were split across different local authority areas, the Electoral Services Manager explained that the fine details were still to be determined and arrangements were dependent on whether it was a combined election or stand-alone Parliamentary election. However, in the case of Doncaster East and Axholme constituency, she explained that it was likely that the ballot papers would need to be returned to North Lincolnshire Council for verification, before being returned back to Doncaster to be counted. Particularly for postal voters, as their personal identifiers would need to be verified by them as Doncaster would not hold that data. Similarly, for the Rawmarsh and Conisbrough constituency, the ballot papers for Conisbrough and Edlington and Warmsworth would be verified by Doncaster Council and then returned to Rotherham Council for counting. It was noted that while this practice was new for Doncaster, it was already being carried out by colleagues in Barnsley and Rotherham, so the Electoral Services Manager would be liaising closely with her counterparts in those other authorities to see how these arrangements worked in practice.

During discussion on the wider context and reasons for the boundary change proposals affecting Doncaster, Councillor Nick Allen explained that the principle changes were in East Yorkshire, with the abolition of the Brigg and Goole constituency, which was to be divided three-ways with part coming into Doncaster and another part into Scunthorpe.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

## 10 ELECTIONS ACT 2022

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the Elections Act 2022, with a particular focus on the measures due to come into force ahead of the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 polls.

The Electoral Services Manager summarised the new measures that would apply to UK Parliamentary elections in Great Britain, PCC elections in England and Wales, and English local government polls, as detailed in paragraph 6 of the report.

It was reported that the biggest change, to be introduced from May 2023, was the new requirement for voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper could be issued. The forms of approved photographic identification, such as a passport or driving licence, were listed in Appendix A to the report. It was noted that the documentation did not have to be in date, e.g. an expired passport could be used by a voter, as long as the photograph still remained a good enough likeness from which to identify the elector. For electors in Great Britain who did not have an accepted form of photo ID, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) would be required to provide an electoral identity document, called a Voter Authority Certificate, or Anonymous Electors Document to eligible electors who applied for one. It was noted that although there were no elections in Doncaster next year, it was expected that there would be demand for these new Certificates from electors as soon as the Electoral Commission's public awareness campaign on the new requirement commenced in January 2023.

The full implications of all the new requirements in the Elections Act were still to be determined, as details were still coming in, including the extent of any New Burdens Funding to be provided by central government to local authorities to cover the increased costs resulting from implementing the new measures in the Act.

In terms of arrangements in polling stations, it was noted that there would need to be a private area or booth available for those electors who wore face coverings for religious purposes or for anonymous electors, so that they could confirm their identities to the Presiding Officers in private.

Discussion followed, during which Members made comments/observations and asked questions on a number of issues including the following:-

- Concern was expressed that the requirement for photo ID would discourage some electors from voting, and also disenfranchise the elderly, who could potentially find it difficult to obtain photographic ID, including those living in care homes. With regard to care homes, the Electoral Services Manager explained that it was intended that the Electoral Services team would visit the homes to

explain the new procedures to the residents and staff, and to ascertain if residents had photographic ID or not. For other elderly electors needing assistance, the expectation was that, where possible, they would come to the Civic Office where staff would take their photograph and upload it with their application on the ERO portal, if they were unable to do it themselves. The Electoral Services Manager pointed out that there were various options to consider in terms of assisting electors, such as possibly holding events out in communities, where each ward would be visited and electors given the opportunity to have their photograph taken by staff so that they did not have to travel to the Civic Office. The Electoral Services Manager added that she expected examples of best practice to become apparent throughout 2023 as other local authorities started to hold elections and operate under the new legislation.

- It was confirmed that the Voter Authority Certificates would be issued free of charge to electors, and that there were no plans nationally at present to introduce digital voter IDs.
- Regarding public awareness of the new requirements, the Electoral Services Manager outlined the various ways in which the changes would be communicated to electors. It was noted that, in addition to the Electoral Commission's advertising campaign, the canvassing letter next year would make reference to the new requirements, and poll cards would include details of the approved forms of ID which electors could use. It was also hoped that it might be possible to 'piggy back' on other Council mailshots and communications to residents, such as Council Tax bills. The Electoral Services Manager stressed, however, that funding would not be provided by the government for sending any additional communications out to electors.
- In reply to a question, the Electoral Services Manager stated that she believed the Voter Authority Certificates would be valid for 10 years, although as they were going to be made of paper, it was unlikely that they would last that long. There was also provision for temporary certificates to be issued, and these would be valid only for the relevant polling day (not multiple elections).
- With regard to the scrapping of the 'fifteen year rule' to allow all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK (expected from July 2023), the Electoral Services Manager explained that it was very difficult to predict numbers of those who may come forward and apply to vote when this rule change was implemented. She pointed out, however, that she had already received some enquiries from British citizens living abroad. It was noted that the process for checking electors' applications could potentially be very time consuming, involving the use of national archives and local records and dependent on whether a full investigation would be required or if applications could be taken at face value, which was yet to be confirmed.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.



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

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

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## City of Doncaster Council

### Report

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Date: 7 February 2023

To: The Chair and Members of the

#### ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

Report Title: Elections Update

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision?
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources	All Auckley	No

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is designed to provide an update on current Elections Activity and any upcoming changes, By-Elections and Neighbourhood Planning Referendums.
2. One of the upcoming major changes to be implemented is from May 2023; voters across England will be required to bring photo ID to vote in person in a polling station. A new form of identification, the Voter Authority Certificate (VAC), will be introduced as a form of ID for those who do not have another form of eligible ID.

#### EXEMPT REPORT

3. This is not an exempt report.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

4. This report is for information, 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?

5. While Doncaster does not have any scheduled elections in 2023, photo ID measures would apply to any by-elections from 4 May 2023 onwards. Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) are to provide those electors without a valid form of

Photo ID with a free voter identification document called a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) from January 2023, whether they have polls or not.

## **VOTER IDENTIFICATION**

6. The Government has introduced legislation to require electors to show an official form of photographic identification (ID) when voting in a polling station. This requirement will apply to the following polls (elections) from 4 May 2023 onwards:

- Local Government elections (Borough and parish)
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- Combined Authority Mayoral elections (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority)
- Referendums
- Parliamentary by-elections (It will also apply to Parliamentary General elections from 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

Electors voting by post are not affected by the requirement for photographic ID. Electors who do not wish to show photographic ID can apply for a postal vote or a proxy vote in the normal way.

7. If an elector does not have any suitable form of photographic ID, and an expired ID is no longer a good likeness or their name appears differently on the electoral register, they can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) - an A4 document containing a photograph of the applicant, supplied by the ERO.

Any application for a Voter Authority Certificate must contain:

- full name
- the address at which they are registered to vote (or have applied to be registered at), or in the case of special category electors, their present, correspondence or BFPO number address
- date of birth
- National Insurance Number
- a statement as to whether they consider it necessary to collect the Voter Authority Certificate in person instead of it being delivered to the relevant delivery address, and the reason for collection
- a declaration that the contents of the application are true, either by signature or some mark that shows that they have made the declaration
- the date of the application

Any application must also contain a suitable photograph of the elector, meeting the relevant size and resolution requirements. The photo must be similar to passport standard and can be taken on a mobile device or camera, but it needs to meet the following requirements to be accepted:

The digital photo must be:

- clear and in focus
- in colour

- against a plain, light-coloured background
- a true likeness, with no photoshop or filters
- at least 600x750 pixels
- JPG, PNG or GIF format — min 50KB, max 20MB

In the photo the applicant must:

- face forwards, looking straight at the camera
- be alone, with no other objects or people
- have a plain expression
- have eyes open and visible, with no hair in front of them
- not wear sunglasses, but normal glasses are fine if they typically wear them
- not have a head covering (apart from religious or medical reasons) not have 'red-eye', glare or shadows over their face

Once an application has been successfully processed, the data is sent to the supplier appointed by the UK Government who will produce the document and then deliver it directly to the applicant via Royal Mail first class post. A Voter Authority Certificate should be printed within one to two working days after an application has been successfully processed.

8. The online application portal [www.gov.uk/voting-photo-id](http://www.gov.uk/voting-photo-id) where an elector may apply for a Voter Authority Certificate went live on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023. So far the City of Doncaster Council has received 46 applications which have been processed as follows:
  - 35 applications have been sent a Voter Authority Certificate
  - 9 applications are on hold (not a suitable photo or register to vote application not yet cleared by DWP etc)
  - 2 applications have been rejected (one duplicate application and one not registered and when contacted didn't want to register or vote)
9. Applicants without internet access can visit the Civic Office where a member of staff will take their photo and help them complete an on-line application. A paper application form can also be posted to the applicant by Electoral Services, however, the applicant will need to provide a suitable photograph. If they are not able to do this themselves, then they will need to visit the Civic Office to have their photograph taken.
10. The Council's Elections team will be taking an active interest in the experiences of areas holding elections in May 2023 and their feedback from administering an election requiring Voter IDs. The Electoral Commission's best practice guidance suggests that additional staff should be used to administer elections and negate the risks of Polling Station queues.

## **ANNUAL ABSENT VOTE REFRESH**

11. By 31 January each year the Electoral Registration Officer must write to each elector who has an absent vote (postal, proxy and postal proxy voters) whose

signature on the postal identifiers register is more than five years old, informing them they must refresh their signature in order to maintain voting by post. This is known as the absent vote refresh and it takes place in January every year in all Local Authorities. Absent voters who have been granted a waiver are not affected by the refresh provisions, as they do not have a signature on the personal identifiers record. Letters and forms have been sent to 3,318 electors in Doncaster who are due to refresh theirs. Electors have six weeks to return their refreshed signature forms, a reminder is sent after 3 weeks. Should they not reply then the elector will lose their entitlement to vote by post and they will need to re-apply by completing a full fresh new postal vote application (including DOB) should they wish to remain a postal voter.

12. From August 2023 changes under the new Elections Act 2022 (subject to secondary legislation) it is expected that the requirement will change to postal voters having to reapply every three years, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years. This will affect the number of refresh application letters from January 2024.

**UPCOMING BY-ELECTIONS AND REFERENDUMS**


13. The Planning department have indicated that the Auckley Neighbourhood Plan is at the final stages and will shortly following the external examiners recommendations be ready to go to a Referendum. There are currently 3,600 electors of which 1,023 are postal voters. There will be two polling stations and it is likely that the Referendum will take place in March/April time. The costs associated with a Neighbourhood Planning Referendum are claimed back by the Planning Department from Central Government.








**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

14. This report is primarily for information only.

**IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES**

- 15.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 <b>Tackling Climate Change</b>				✓
Comments:				

 <b>Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities</b>				✓
Comments:				

<b>Fair &amp; Inclusive</b>	✓			
<p>The Council has a duty to ensure Elections and Referendums 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. The Council has worked hard to ensure that voting is accessible to all. A full Polling Places review was carried out in 2019 and full risk assessment reviews in 2021 to ensure all Polling Stations are compliant with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and will continue to be reviewed to ensure they meet any new legislative requirements.</p>				

**Legal Implications [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 27/01/2023]**

16. 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, 2014, 2018
  - The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2014, 2015 and 2018
  - Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
17. The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022 and the secondary legislation which provides for how new voter ID measures from the Election Act will work in practice was laid in parliament on 3 November 2022.

**Financial Implications [Officer Initials: PH | Date: 27/01/2023]**

18. The government have committed to providing New Burdens Funding to local authorities via Section 31 Grants to cover the increased costs resulting from implementing measures in the Elections Act.
19. The first ‘round’ of funding will be for the implementation of the accessibility policy changes and the introduction of voter identification. An Initial grant of £12,952 was received in November 2022, with further grant payment expected in April 2023 of £7,123.
20. Any Parish By-elections are claimed back in full from the Parish and any Neighbourhood Planning Referendums are claimed back from Central Government via the planning department.

**Human Resources Implications**

21. Human Resources Implications have not been requested for this report.

**Technology Implications**

22. Technology Implications have not been requested for this report



## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

- 23.** Ensuring the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the Council, RO and ERO meets the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards and complies with their legal statutory duties. Delivering well-run elections improve our reputation and meeting the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards.
- 24.** There is national concern about finding additional staff to work on polling stations and that experienced staff may no longer wish to do the role due to the added responsibility and potential for abuse from electors regarding producing valid ID before issued with a ballot paper. There is no legislative requirement for a female member of staff on each polling station but the need to consider electors who may not wish to reveal their face to a male staff member for religious/cultural reason. There will be a need for an in depth training session for all polling staff, particularly POs regarding the photo IDs accepted and new forms to be completed. There will also be a need to purchase additional polling station equipment such as privacy booths and mirrors.

## **CONSULTATION**

- 25.** Not applicable

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 26.** Association of Electoral Administrators newsletters [www.aea-elections.co.uk](http://www.aea-elections.co.uk)  
The Electoral Commission newsletters <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

**27.**

ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
RO	Returning Officer
PO	Presiding Officer
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
DLUHC	The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
VAC	Voter Authority Certificate

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

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**Damian Allen**

**Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer**

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## City of Doncaster Council

### Report

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**Date: 7 February 2023**

**To: The Chair and Members of the**

### **ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

**Report Title: Canvass Update**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision?</b>
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources	All	No

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. This report provides members with an update on the final outcome of the Annual Canvass and a detailed breakdown of the statistics for each Route and final electorate by ward.

### **EXEMPT REPORT**

2. This report is not exempt.

### **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?**

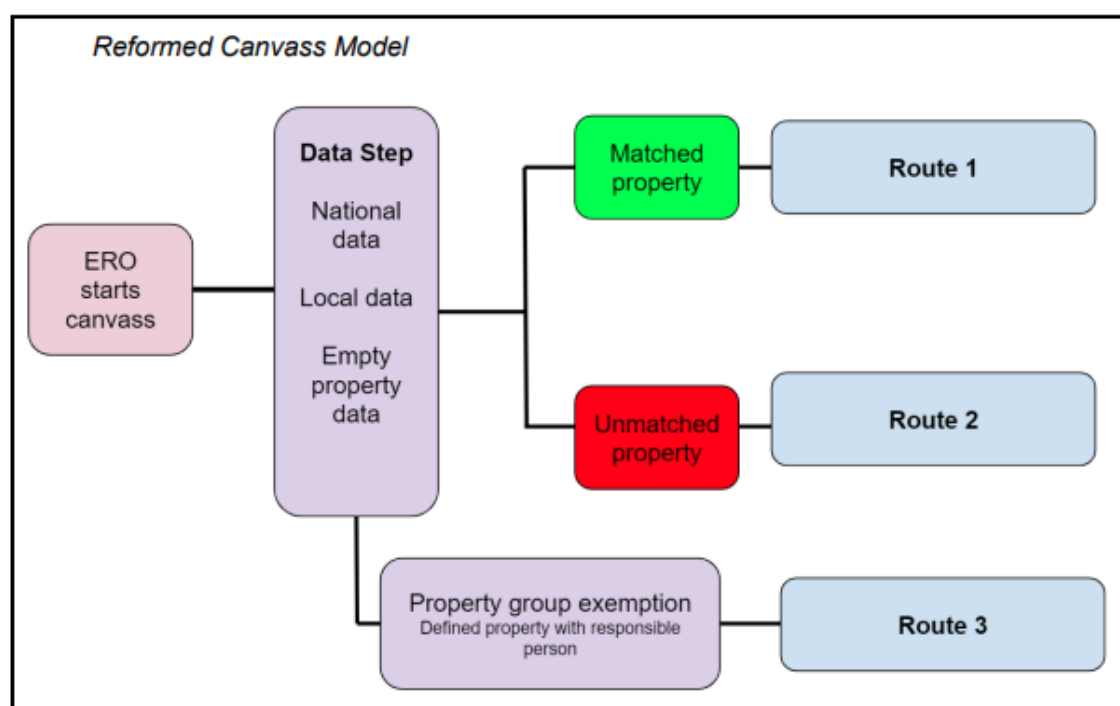
4. Ensuring the Electoral Register is as up to date as possible and carrying out proactive electoral activity is key to public engagement to ensure residents are registered to enable them to vote when an election occurs.

### **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, this is called the Annual Canvass. The purpose of the canvass is to identify everyone who should be on the electoral register. This means identifying

citizens who should be registered but are currently not, as well as identifying electors who are no longer at a property and should therefore be removed from the register. A revised version of the electoral register must be published by December 1<sup>st</sup> each year, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

6. With the introduction of the canvass reforms in 2020, only properties where all the electors cannot be matched against national and/or local data are required to respond. 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.
7. The canvass incorporates a 'data step' at the outset of the process. This informs the ERO, based on the data available, which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition, based on matching data on the electoral register against national Government data and, where relevant, locally held data sources. 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.



8. The ERO will follow one of three 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.

**Route 3** - These properties are defined as Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants.

### **Route 1**

9. The National data matching process must take place between 1 June to 31 August 2022 and Electoral Services carried out the National data match download on 23 June 2022 and were provided with the results on 27 June 2022. There were 227,383 registered electors and 142,519 properties in Doncaster and 110,867 (77.79%) properties successfully matched from the initial National data matching download for Route 1.
10. Electoral Services managed to obtain confirmation from 23,148 Route 1 properties reducing the number of letters needing to be sent to Route 1 properties from 110,867 letters to 87,719 letters. Letters were sent to those 87,719 properties on 16 August 2022 advising residents to contact us, only if the information we currently hold is incorrect.

### **Route 2**

11. These properties are the un-matched properties that do require a response. Under stage 1, we sent letters and e-mails to 31,551 properties and 7,975 (25.29%) properties responded. 23,551 properties were sent Route 2, stage 2 forms which required a response and 3,634 (15.43%) properties responded. Leaving 19,912 properties remained outstanding and required a personal visit under stage 3, foot canvassers began door knocking w/c 3<sup>rd</sup> October and finished by 23<sup>rd</sup> November, along with electoral services data mining to try to obtain a response from those remaining non-responding properties. At the close of stage 3 a further 6,120 (30.74%) responses were obtained. Overall for all three stages the total return rate was 17,729 (56.23%) responses for Route 2.

### **Route 3**

12. These properties are defined as Care Homes, all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants. The Electoral Services Team contacted all Care Homes directly due to the high turn around in these types of properties to establish that everything is as up to date as possible. We were able to obtain a response from all care homes achieving a 100% response rate for route 3.

### **Breakdown**

13. The overall response rate for all three Routes including those who did not need to respond was 90.27% which is ever so slightly down on last year's return. A breakdown per year can be found below:

Year	Responses received at the end of Canvass	% of Responded properties at end of Canvass	Number of properties outstanding
2022	128,652	90.27%	13,802
2021	129,483	91.85%	11,483
2020*	132,801	94.67%	7,479
2019*	117,000	84.20%	21,948
2018	119,859	86.42%	18,836
2017	118,017	85.70%	19,698
2016	112,364	82.87%	23,230

\*2019 Canvass was ended early due to snap Parliamentary election on 12 December 2019

\*2020 Canvass no foot canvass carried out due to Covid

14. Although the annual canvass has concluded, we are still sending Invitation to Register (ITR) forms to individuals where we only have a name and address but no personal information (DOB & NINO) which were identified during the annual canvass. There were 1,261 Invitation to Register (ITRs) forms sent out w/c 16<sup>th</sup> January by e-mail and paper forms (where we don't hold an e-mail address).

15. The 2022 annual canvass has been completed and the revised Electoral Register was published on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 ensuring the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) met their statutory duty. The new Electorate as of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 was 224,636 electors and 58,331 Postal Voters. A detailed breakdown of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 electorate by ward including postal vote breakdown is provided at **Appendix A** of this report.

## OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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









## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

17. This report is primarily for information only.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

18.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
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 <b>Tackling Climate Change</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future</b>				✓
Comments:				
 <b>Promoting the borough and its</b>				✓

<b>cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities</b>				
Comments:				
<b>Fair &amp; Inclusive</b>	✓			
The Council has a duty to ensure all eligible electors can register to vote and respond to canvass forms 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) link on the Council Web page.				

### **Legal Implications [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 26/01/2023]**

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

- Representation of the People Act
- The Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations
- The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass Amendment) Regulations
- Local Government Act
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act

### **Financial Implications [Officer Initials: PH | Date: 26/01/2023]**

20. This work is funded solely from the Registration of Electors budget (NC003). Central Government no longer provide Councils with funding towards the annual canvass due to the reduction in the cost of delivering the Canvass under the Canvass Reforms.

### **Human Resources Implications**

21. There are no Human Resources Implications arising from this report.

### **Technology Implications [Officer Initials: PW | Date: 26/01/2023 ]**

22. The 'Electoral Automated Service' is used to allow electors to respond to canvass communication anytime via an automated service; on-line, text, phone or e-mail rather than just by the more expensive option of return post. The Technology Governance Board (TGB) approved a request to renew the contract for this service to 31/08/24, in line with the contract for the Xpress Electoral Management Software. The Gov.UK Notify solution is also used for emailing electors in relation to the annual canvass.



## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

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

## **CONSULTATION**

24. Not applicable

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

25. Previous EDSC reports.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

26.

ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
TGB	Technology Governance Board
ITR	Invitation to Register
NINO	National Insurance Number
DOB	Date of Birth

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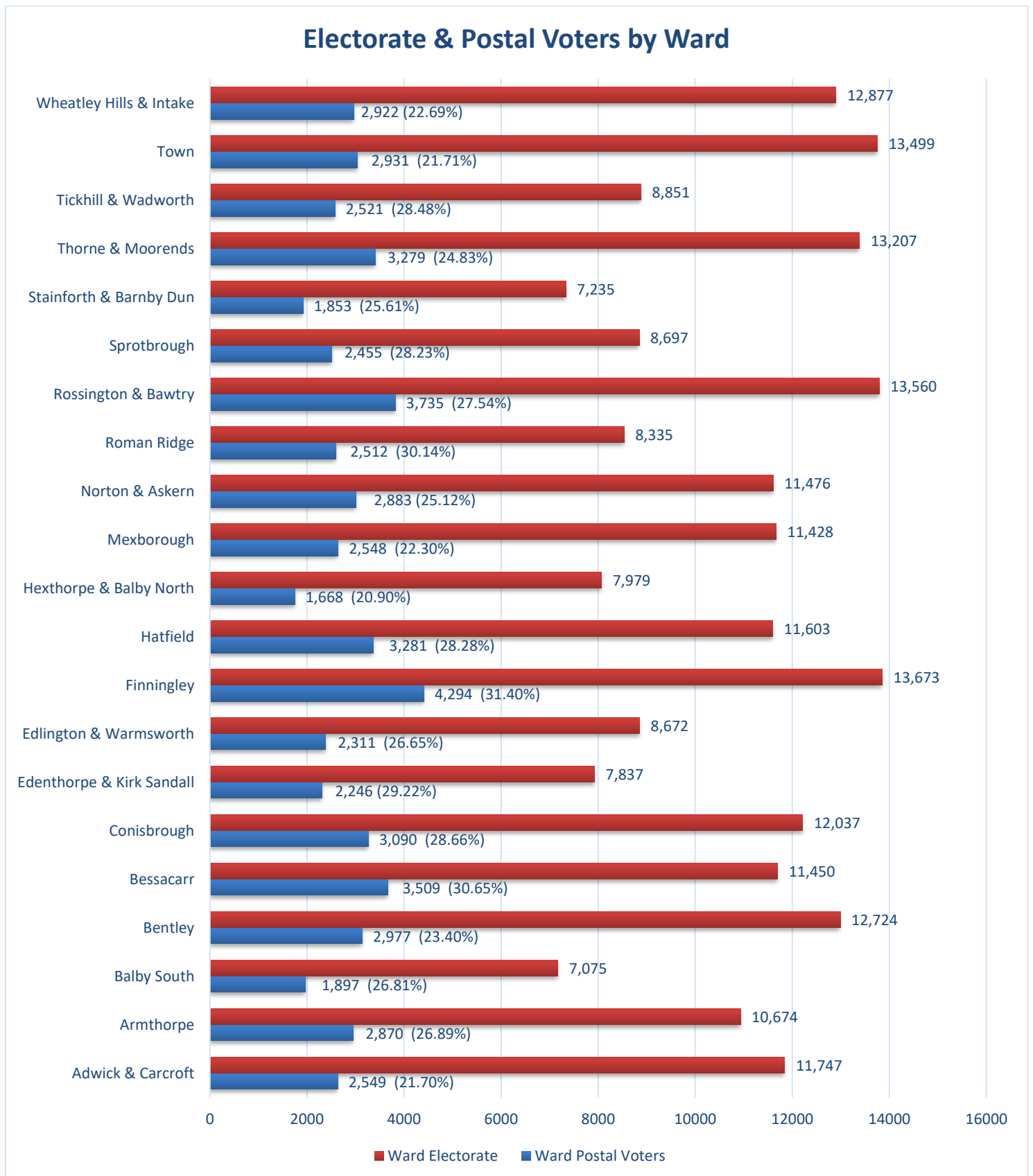
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**City of Doncaster Council Electorate - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

Total Electorate: 224,636

Total Postal Voters: 58,331 (25.97% of the electorate are postal voters).

The electorate and postal voters for each ward are broken down below with each ward % of postal voters



**City of Doncaster Council Electorate - 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021**

Total Electorate 224,636 broken down per ward by % of the full Electorate

