



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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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.

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