



Doncaster Council

Report

24 November 2020

To the Chair and Members of the ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

2021 ELECTIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update to Members on the upcoming Elections scheduled for 6th May 2021.

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 7th May 2020 was postponed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic under the '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 19th March 2020.

7. This will make 2021 a particularly challenging year due to the combination of polls all with different types of voting and counting procedures due to supplementary voting for both Mayoral and PCC, without the extra complications Covid-19 brings. The polls scheduled to take place in Doncaster on Thursday 6th May 2021 as well as those postponed from 2020 are as follows:
 - Borough Elected Mayor
 - all-out Borough Councillors
 - all-out Town/Parish Councillors
 - Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum
8. Early planning meetings have begun to take place with the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), which is Barnsley Councils Chief Executive. The PARO is personally legally responsible for the co-ordination of the delivery of the election across South Yorkshire and is required to discharge specific functions including the publication of statutory notices, nomination of candidates, printing of ballot papers (although this will be delegated to the Local Returning Officer), approval and collation of verification and count figures and the declaration of result. At a recent meeting, all four Authorities agreed to publish the Notice of Election for all polls as early as possible to allow Nominations for all elections to open for a longer period of time to help those such as Doncaster with many polls taking place. It is expected that this will be w/c 22nd March 2021, the final date for publication is the 30th March 2021. Early planning arrangements indicate that the PCC Count will take place on Monday 10th May 2021.
9. Although the dates and times have not yet been set, is expected that the Counts for all Elections will take place separately at Doncaster Racecourse on the following days:
 - Thursday 6th May 2021
Following the close of Poll - verification of all ballot papers for Elected Mayor, Borough Cllrs, Town/Parish Cllrs, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and Edenthorpe NPR, followed by the counting of the Mayoral ballot papers.
 - Friday 7th May 2021
Counting of Borough Cllr ballot papers.
 - Saturday 8th May 2021
Counting of Town/Parish Cllr and Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning Referendum ballot papers.
 - Monday 10th May 2021
Counting of the Police and Crime Commissioner ballot papers.
10. There is likely to be an increase in Postal Vote requests due to the pandemic, which will impact on sending application forms out, processing applications within the electoral services team, printing and despatch pressures on our print provider and the processing and sorting 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 will impact on the higher turnout of votes to count when there are 5 polls for some electors.

11. All polling stations which were booked for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, have been postponed to next year. Extra steps will need to be carried out to ensure polling stations are Covid compliant; this includes carrying out Risk Assessments to ensure the safety of those staff working and those electors voting in the polling station. The Racecourse has been 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 on-line training sessions will be carried out.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. 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

13.

Outcomes	Implications
<p>Doncaster Working: 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"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	
<p>Doncaster Living: 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"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	
<p>Doncaster Learning: 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"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or 	

<p>better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	
<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	
<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	<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

14. 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: 16/11/2020]

15. 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: 16/11/2020]

16. Any costs associated from the cancellation of the Police and Crime Commissioner Election or the Edenthorpe Neighbourhood Planning

Referendum along with future costs from next year 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.

The cost of the Mayoral and Borough Cllr elections will be at a cost to the Council and the cost of the Town/Parish Cllrs will be re-charged to each Town/Parish Council separately.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

17. Human Resources implications have not been requested.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

18. Technology implications have not been requested.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

19. Health implications have not been requested.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: TB Date 13/11/2020]

20. 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

21. N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

22. Previous EDSC reports.

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Trina Barber
Electoral Services Manager
Legal & Democratic Services
Tel: 01302 734398
E-mail: trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk

Damian Allen
Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer