



City of Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 21 November 2023

To: The Chair and Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

Report Title: Elections Activity

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision?
Cllr Jane Nightingale, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources	Rossington & Bawtry Stainforth	No

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides members with detailed information and results from the following By-Elections:

- Rossington and Bawtry ward By-Election held on 16 November 2023.
- Stainforth Town Council By-election held on 16 November 2023.

2. EXEMPT REPORT

This is not an exempt report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report is for information, the Committee is asked to note the report and make any additional comments in relation to the contents.

4. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

Having accessible and well-organised elections and referendums are key to public engagement in the democratic process. Elections are the cornerstone of our democratic process and are important to all of our residents. Elections give the electorate the opportunity to hold politicians to account and shape the future direction of national and local government.

5. BACKGROUND

By-Elections are a significant project, which are delivered by a small core team and supported by a small number of individuals internally across the Council to undertake working on polling stations. These by-elections are the first in Doncaster to be carried out under the new Voter ID requirements and improvements to support accessibility in polling stations that came into force on the 4th May 2023. Also, during the By-election timetable the new Elections Act measures came into force for postal and proxy voting revisions.

All Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks undertook a lengthy training session dedicated to voter ID and accessibility in advance of working on polling stations. All Polling Stations were supplied with a privacy ID booth, mirror, tactile voting devices, large print elections stationery, pencils with grips and magnifiers to assist the visually impaired.

6. ROSSINGTON AND BAWTRY WARD BY-ELECTION

Due to the resignation of a sitting Councillor a vacancy occurred for a City Councillor for the Rossington and Bawtry ward which was called by two local government electors to fill the vacancy by holding an election.

There was an eligible electorate of 13,473 electors of which 3,585 were issued with Postal Votes and 1,984 (55.34%) were returned and personal identifiers correctly verified. A further 5 postal votes were rejected due to having the incorrect date of birth and those electors will be notified accordingly.

Two days before the Postal Vote application deadline on the 31 October 2023, the new ERO absent vote portal became live allowing electors to apply for an absent vote online. We had 3 postal vote applications and one proxy vote application from electors of the Rossington and Bawtry ward which were successfully processed and issued.

On polling day 615 (6.22%) electors cast their vote in the nine polling stations across the ward. Between the notice of election (12th October) and up to the deadline (5pm 8th November) we received and issued 3 requests for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) for those people who had no acceptable form of photo ID and on polling day 4 people in total used a VAC in order to vote. On polling day no electors were refused a ballot paper for ID photos not being of a good likeness or a forgery document. 12 people who tried to vote at a polling station were initially turned away for not bringing acceptable ID but 5 of those people returned later in the day with acceptable ID and were able to vote. This means 7 (1.14%) people who tried to vote in a polling station in the Rossington and Bawtry by-election were not issued with a ballot paper because of the new voter ID requirement.

The total number of ballot papers verified for both polling stations and postal votes were 2,599 giving a total turnout of 19.29%.

There were four candidates and Ken Guest was duly elected as City of Doncaster Councillor for the Rossington and Bawtry ward; a full breakdown of the results can be found below:

7. RESULTS

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
COOKE John Nolan	Independent	461
DUHRE Surjit Singh	Reform UK	168
GREENHALGH Carol	The Conservative Party Candidate	492
GUEST Ken	Labour Party	1467 Elected

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:	Number of ballot papers
A want of an official mark	0
B voting for more Candidates than voter was entitled to	9
C writing or mark by which voter could be identified	0
D unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	2
Total	11

Electorate: 13,473	Ballot Papers Issued: 2,599	Turnout: 19.29%
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8. STAINFORTH TOWN COUNCIL BY-ELECTION

Due to the resignation of two sitting Councillors two vacancies occurred for Town Councillors for Stainforth Town Council which was called by the relevant ten electors from within the Stainforth Town area to fill both vacancies by holding an election. There was an eligible electorate of 4,170 electors of which 870 were issued with Postal Votes and 301 (34.60%) were returned and personal identifiers correctly verified with none rejected.

Two days before the Postal Vote application deadline on the 31 October 2023, the new ERO absent vote portal became live allowing electors to apply for an absent vote online, although we didn't receive any for Stainforth Town Council electors. On polling day 60 (1.82%) electors cast their vote in the three polling stations across the Stainforth Town area. Between the notice of election (12th October) and up to the deadline (5pm 8th November) we received no further requests for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) for anyone in the Stainforth Town Council area, although on polling day 2 people used a VAC in order to vote. On polling day no electors were refused a ballot paper for ID photos not being of a good likeness or a forgery document, although 2 people who tried to vote at a polling station were initially turned away for not bringing acceptable ID, both returned later in the day with acceptable ID and were able to vote. This means that no electors in the Stainforth Town Council by-election who tried to vote in a polling station was unable to do so, because of the new voter ID requirement.

There were three candidates and the count was conducted using counting sheets due to there being two vacancies, Christine Helen Lunney and Andy Flynn were both

duly elected as Town Councillors for Stainforth Town Council and a full breakdown of the results can be found below:

9. RESULTS

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BEADLE Tim		138
FLYNN Andy	Independent	212 Elected
LUNNEY Christine Helen	Independent	236 Elected

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:	Number of ballot papers
A want of an official mark	0
B voting for more Candidates than voter was entitled to	0
C writing or mark by which voter could be identified	0
D unmarked or wholly void for uncertainty	3
Total	3

Vacant Seats: 2	Electorate: 4,170	Turnout: 8.66 %
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10. OPTIONS CONSIDERED







Elections and Referendums are a statutory function and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. To support the Elections Act changes all polling station staff undertook a lengthy training session dedicated to Voter ID and accessibility in the polling station. Extra polling staff were also appointed to busier polling stations as recommended by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

This report is primary for information only.

12. IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

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

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

Fair & Inclusive	✓			
<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 and recommendations from the Elections Act 2022. The next full Polling Places Review will be completed by January 2025.</p>				

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 17/11/2023]

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
- Elections Act 2022

14. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: CR | Date: 17/11/2023]

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 2022. Funding was used to pay for privacy ID booths, mirrors, extra poll clerks and towards extra training of staff.

All other costs associated with the Rossington and Bawtry ward by-election are contained within existing budgets.

All other costs associated with the Stainforth Town Council by-election are claimed back in full from the Town Council.

15. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources Implications have not been requested for this report.

16. TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

Technology Implications have not been requested for this report

17. RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

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.

18. CONSULTATION

Not applicable

19. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous EDSC reports

20. GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
RO	Returning Officer
DLUHC	The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
VAC	Voter Authority Certificate

21. REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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