

# AGENDA ITEM 10

## DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP 21 February 2022

Commenced: 4.00pm

Terminated: 4.35pm

**Present:** Councillors Cooney (In the Chair), Billington, Fairfoull Feeley J. Fitzpatrick, Kitchen, Reid, M Smith, Ryan, Ward and Warrington.

### 9. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

#### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 27 September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### 10. MAY 2022 ELECTIONS

Members considered a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions, which reminded Members that there would be standalone Borough Council elections on 5 May 2022. It was explained that the Notice of Election would be published on 28 March 2022. Therefore the nomination period would be from 9.00am on Tuesday, 29 March until 4:00 pm on Tuesday 5 April 2022. It was noted that the temporary reduction in number of assentors from 10 to 2 no longer applied.

For the elections in 2021 parties were encouraged to collect nomination packs for groups of candidates rather than all individual candidates collecting their own, it is suggested that this approach should continue for the 2022 election. To help ensure that paperwork was collected and returned in an orderly way appointments should be made for collection and return of nomination papers. Members were informed that prior to formally submitting nomination papers it would be possible to have papers informally checked as had been the case in previous years.

With regard to postal votes Members were informed they would be dispatched on Thursday 21 April and should arrive on Friday 22 April, which was the same schedule as we used in 2021. Arrangements put in place for verification and opening of postal votes in 2021 were different to the usual arrangements to ensure conducted in a covid safe way. As it appeared likely that there would be no restrictions in place for 2022 Elections, Members were asked to consider if they wished to retain the approach adopted in 2021 where in order to minimise the number of people in the room at the same time the number of wards opened at the one time was restricted to five and the number of candidate representatives for each ward was be restricted to 1, with one member of staff opening the postal votes for each ward. This approach meant that there were six postal vote opening days. The usual approach to postal vote opening was to have postal vote opening sessions by constituency i.e. all wards within each constituency being done at the same time. With this approach there would be two postal vote opening staff per ward, therefore requiring two candidate representative per ward. This approach would require four postal vote opening days. Postal vote scanning to check signatures and dates of birth will be undertaken at Dukinfield Town Hall in the usual way between 9am and 5pm each day from 25 April to 5 May.

Members were informed that the laws governing voting at polling stations would be the same as for other elections and it was anticipated that there will be no additional restrictions in place at the May 2022 Elections. It was explained that as part of the preparations for the May 2022 elections requests have been received to use alternative venues as polling stations from:

- Stalybridge North Ward - Millbrook Primary to be replaced with Reach Church;
- Ashton St Michael's Ward - Parochial Primary School to be replaced with Albion Church vestibule;

- St Peters Ward – Holy Trinity Primary to be replaced with Holy Trinity Community Centre;
- St Peters Ward – St Stephens Primary to be replaced with St Stephens Church;
- Dukinfield Ward – St Albans Mission Hall alternative venue required as venue longer available.

It was stated that for standalone Borough Council elections in the past Dukinfield Town Hall has been used as the venue for verification and counting of votes, this venue works best administratively given it is the administrative centre for the election and has been used effectively on a number of occasions previously although it does involve split levels. The alternative option as a count venue was Unit 7, Plantation Industrial Estate. This venue had been used for combined and parliamentary elections in the past, and was used in 2021 given the additional space. The verification of votes for all wards will begin at 10pm on 5 May following immediately by the counting of vote.

**AGREED that:**

- (i) the statutory timetable for 5 May 2022 Borough Council elections be noted;**
- (ii) it be noted that the Notice of Election would be published on Monday 28 March 2022;**
- (iii) it be noted that nominations can be submitted from 9am on Tuesday 29 March 2022 until 4pm on Tuesday 5 April 2022;**
- (iv) it be agreed that where possible nominations forms be collected and returned for groups of candidates rather than all individual candidates collecting their own;**
- (v) it be noted that the temporary reduction in the number of assentors required no longer applies;**
- (vi) Members note the intention to dispatch postal votes on Thursday 21 April;**
- (vii) the opening of postal votes be conducted on the same basis as in 2021 whereby five wards would be opened at a time with one member of staff per ward and one representative of each candidate in attendance;**
- (viii) the following changes to polling stations be agreed owing to unforeseen circumstances:**
  - **Stalybridge North Ward - Millbrook Primary to be replaced with Reach Church;**
  - **Ashton St Michael's Ward - Parochial Primary School to be replaced with Albion Church vestibule;**
  - **St Peters Ward – Holy Trinity Primary to be replaced with Holy Trinity Community Centre;**
  - **St Peters Ward – St Stephens Primary to be replaced with St Stephens Church;**
  - **Dukinfield Ward – That an alternative venue for the polling station at St Albans Mission Hall be identified on consultation with ward Members.**
- (ix) the verification and count be held in Unit 7, Plantation Industrial Estate beginning at 10pm on 5 May 2022.**

## **11. PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW**

Members considered a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions, which updated Members on progress with the Parliamentary Boundary Review currently being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England. Members were reminded that the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) was required by Parliament to undertake an independent and impartial review of all constituencies in England, to rebalance the number of electors in each constituency. The 2023 Boundary Review also required that the number of constituencies in England increased from 533 to 543. The Commission is holding a secondary consultation on its initial proposals for new constituencies, which takes place from 22 February to 4 April 2022. During the consultation, public hearings would be held across the country to allow members of the public to provide their views in person.

One point to note was that the Parliamentary Constituencies were based on existing ward not the wards that would exist following the implementation of the recent local government boundary review. In Tameside this would mean that in some areas parts of new wards would be in different constituencies to the rest of the ward, these areas were:

### **Stalybridge North and Stalybridge South**

22 Properties in one postcode (currently 43 Electors) to be moved to Stalybridge North, but would remain a part of the Denton and Hyde constituency.

### **Dukinfield Stalybridge and Hyde Newton – The Fairways estate.**

40 Properties in one postcode (currently 80 Electors) to be moved to Stalybridge North, but would be a part of the Denton and Hyde constituency.

### **Audenshaw and Denton West**

8 Properties (currently 20 Electors) to be moved to Audenshaw, but would be a part of the Denton and Hyde constituency, over the Ashton under Lyne with rest of Audenshaw ward.

### **Audenshaw and Denton North East**

Audenshaw to gain 28 properties in a single postcode (42 electors) from DENNE3 (around Stanhope close). But they would be in Denton and Hyde constituency under proposals.

Denton North East to gain 235 Properties (428 electors) from 9 postcodes in AUD2 but those electors would be in the Ashton constituency under proposals.

This issues is shared with a number of other GM Boroughs where the ward boundary changes mean wards will be split between constituencies.

### **AGREED:**

**That the update be noted.**

## **12. BOROUGH COUNCIL BOUNDARY REVIEW**

Members considered a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions, which updated Members on implementation of the outcome of the recent Local Government Boundary Review. It was explained that following the publication of the outcome of the local government boundary review in 2021 changes would be made to the boundaries of most wards in the Borough. These changes would not be implemented until the Borough Council elections in May 2023. This would mean that for the elections in May 2022 the existing ward boundaries would be used and any by-elections before May 2023. The revised Boundaries would be used for the 2023 Borough Council Elections, which will be all out elections, where all seats on the Council would be up for election.

It was explained that the current register of electors based on current boundaries would be in force until March 2023 when a new register based on the revised boundaries would be published. Work on amending the register would, however, begin soon after the May 2022 elections, we will in effect be amending a shadow register until March 2023, this would involve moving properties between wards in the background. This would not impact on electors until the May 2023 elections, prior to which electors would be informed where the voting arrangements have changed.

Prior to the implementation of the revised Boundaries in 2023 a review of polling districts and polling stations would be undertaken. It is a requirement to undertake a statutory review of polling districts and polling stations every five years, the next one was due in January 2023, this would begin after the May 2022 Borough Council elections so that it was completed prior to the implementation of the new ward boundaries. All Members would be involved in the review of polling districts and polling stations and the Democratic Processes Working Group would consider any recommended changes prior to consideration by full Council.

### **AGREED:**

**That the update be noted.**

### **13. ELECTIONS BILL 2021**

Members received a verbal update on progress with the Elections Bill 2021. It was stated that a range of new measures were proposed as part of the Elections Bill. The Bill had completed its passage through the House of Commons and was now awaiting further consideration in the House of Lords. The Bill contained provisions relating to:

- Voter identification;
- Postal and proxy voting measures;
- Clarification of undue influence;
- Accessibility of polls;
- Overseas Electors;
- EU Voting and Candidacy Rights;
- The Electoral Commission;
- Notional Expenditure;
- Political finance;
- Intimidation: new electoral sanction; and
- Digital imprints

Members were informed that further updates on the implication of the Bill for elections in Tameside would be provided to a future meeting of the Working Group.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the update be noted.**

### **14. ELECTORAL COMMISSION BULLETINS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions that provided Members with recent copies of the Electoral Commission news bulletin, which set out current issues affecting the democratic framework for local government.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CHAIR**