

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

30 September 2019

Commenced: 4.00pm

Terminated: 4.30pm

Present: Councillors Cooney (In the Chair), Fairfoull, J. Fitzpatrick, Kitchen, Reid, Ward and Warrington.

Apologies: Councillor Billington, Feeley, Ryan and M Smith.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 8 July 2019 be approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Warrington as present.

7. UPDATE ON ANNUAL CANVASS AND PREPARATIONS FOR PARLIAMENTARY GENERAL ELECTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Director (Governance and Pensions), which updated Members on progress with the Annual Canvass of electors and preparations for a possible parliamentary election.

It was explained that initial Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) were sent out on 28 August 2019 and that first reminders would be sent out on 1 October 2019. Response rates to the original HEFs totalled 56.8% meaning that 45,000 reminder HEFs were due to be sent out. The revised electoral register was due to be published on 1 December 2019 and up to 30 November 2019 further reminders would be sent to all non-responding properties as well as additional reminders for non-responding Invitations to Register. The final stage of the canvass would be to undertake local data matching where information for non-responding properties was matched against council tax records.

Members also considered practical arrangements that might need to be put in place should a Parliamentary Election be called in the next few months. Members were reminded that the minimum time between the dissolution of Parliament and election day was 25 working days and the report set out the key dates in a timetable based on a 25 day elections.

It was explained that, in the event of a Parliamentary Election, it would be necessary for core election support staff to be based at Dukinfield Town Hall once the election was called to meet access needs. Nominations would be undertaken at Dukinfield Town Hall as would postal vote opening sessions. It was stated that as with the previous parliamentary election in 2017, given the statutory timetable and practicalities around printing the earliest that postal votes could be prepared and dispatched was 11 days before the date of poll, giving electors 10 days to return their postal votes. With regard to postal vote verification and opening this would be conducted on a parliamentary constituency basis and a possible timetable for opening postal votes was provided.

Members were informed that the process for submitting nomination papers for a Parliamentary Elections was very tight. The earliest that nomination papers could be submitted was the first working day after the Notice of Election was published. The Notice of Election could not be published until the writ had been received, it was therefore likely that there would only be a four day period for delivery of nomination papers.

The options for a venue in which to hold a count for three Parliamentary Constituencies were very limited. The 2015 and 2017 Election Counts had been undertaken at Unit 7, Plantation Estate. It

was explained that Unit 7 was being used for storage and would need to be cleared and brought up to a condition where it could again be used as the count venue.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the progress with the Annual Canvass of Electors and timetable for the remainder of the canvass be noted;**
- (ii) That the possible timeframe for a Parliamentary Election be noted;**
- (iii) That it be agreed that the administration of a Parliamentary Election would be undertaken at Dukinfield Town Hall for the period of the election;**
- (iv) That the postal vote verification and opening be undertaken at Dukinfield Town Hall;**
- (v) That the Count for the Parliamentary Election be held at Unit 7, Plantation Industrial Estate.**

8. ELECTORAL COMMISSION BULLETINS

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (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