

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

17 February 2020

Commenced: 4.00pm

Terminated: 5.05pm

Present: Councillors Cooney (In the Chair), Billington, Fairfoull, J. Fitzpatrick, Ryan and Warrington.

Apologies: Councillors Feeley, Kitchen, Reid, M Smith and Ward.

9. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 30 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

10. 2019 GENERAL ELECTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Director (Governance and Pensions), which outlined the administrative issues which arose during the 2019 General Election. It was explained that although there had been speculation for some time the General Election had been called with minimum legal notice. It was also explained that much of the planning and preparatory work had been undertaken during the annual canvass of electors.

- Members considered the following matters:
- Communications;
- Nominations process;
- Polling Stations;
- Postal Votes;
- Campaign issues; and
- Arrangements for the Count.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted;
- (ii) That all staff who worked on the elections be thanked for their contribution to the efficient running of the elections and their contribution to the democratic process.

11. 2020 ELECTIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Director (Governance and Pensions), which updated Members on the statutory timetable for the 7 May 2020 Combined Borough Council and GM Mayoral Election and the on-going arrangements for the elections.

It was explained that delivery of nominations papers for the Borough Council elections would be from the day after the publication of the Notice of Election, which would be published on 31 March until 4pm on Wednesday 8 April 2020.

Members considered the most appropriate venue in which to administer the elections, including where to undertake the nominations process, postal vote processing and arrangements for the Count.

With regard to postal votes Members considered whether postal votes should be dispatched as combined pack, if so the dispatch date would have to be 23 April 2020.

The Working Group also considered the arrangements for polling stations. A request had been received to move the polling station for St Peters 5 polling district from St Stephen's Primary School to St Stephens Church in order to enable the more efficient running of the school and enable them to stay open.

The Count for the Local Elections is normally held at Dukinfield Town Hall and it is proposed that this should continue to be the case. Also, as is normally the case, it is intended to begin the verification and count immediately after close of poll at 10.00pm.

Verification of both ballot papers will be undertaken at Dukinfield Town Hall and will commence immediately following the close of poll at 10pm. The verification will be conducted on a ward basis and will be undertaken for both elections at the same time. Following verification GM Mayoral ballot papers will be securely stored and the counting of votes for the Borough Council elections will begin immediately.

The Borough Election count will be completed on Thursday night / Friday morning. With regard to the GM Mayoral election following verification these ballot papers will be securely stored and transported to Manchester Conference Centre (formerly GMEX). As Friday 8 May is a Bank Holiday it is intended to count the GM Mayoral Election ballot papers on Saturday 9 May, with the Count starting at 11am.

The count will also be conducted on a ward basis. The count will take the form of the counting of first preference votes and, unless a candidate receives more than 50% of first preference votes then for the candidates remaining in the contest the second preference votes must be counted. If a second count does take place this is likely to take less time than the first count due to the reduced number of candidates remaining in the contest and the need to only count the second preference votes of voters whose first preference votes were cast for an eliminated candidate.

RESOLVED:

- (i) Note the timetable for 2020 Combined Borough Council and GM Mayoral Election (see Appendix 1);**
- (ii) Consider the arrangements for postal vote dispatch and the timetable for postal vote opening;**
- (iii) Note that all polling stations with more than 1750 polling station electors will be double polling stations;**
- (iv) Recommend to Council the change the polling station for STP5;**
- (v) Note that the arrangements for verification and counting of vote.**

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Working Group considered the next steps following the presentation to all Members by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Members were informed that Officers were preparing information for consideration by Members prior to any submission being made to the Boundary Commission. It was suggested that the Working Group should consider the information and determine the Council's approach to making a submission to the Commission, subject to any approval required by Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Working Group consider information prior to June deadline to determine the approach the Council should take to making a submission to the Boundary Commission.

13. 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