

# **MINUTES OF THE ELECTORAL REGISTRATION WORKING PARTY**

**Tuesday, 23 June 2015 at 8.30 pm**

PRESENT: Councillors Kevin Bonavia, Alan Hall, Stella Jeffrey, Roy Kennedy (Chair), David Michael, Rachel Onikosi, Jacq Paschoud and Jonathan Slater.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joe Dromey and Councillor Jim Mallory.

## **7. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **8. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **9. Presentation from Bite the Ballot**

The Chair welcomed Oliver Sidorczuk from Bite the Ballot to the meeting.

Mr Sidorczuk gave a presentation to the Working Party on the work Bite the Ballot had done to drive up voter registration and electoral awareness amongst young people.

The Working Party thanked Mr Sidorczuk for his presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

## **10. IER across the UK**

The Principal Policy and Projects officer presented a report to the Working Party on under-registration across the UK.

The Chair thanked the Principal Policy and Projects officer on behalf of the Working Party for the work undertaken on the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

## **11. Update on IER**

The Working Party considered a report which provided an update on the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the Council wide initiatives undertaken to date, and planned for the future to maximise registration in Lewisham.

By May 2015, the total electorate in Lewisham had increased from approximately 189,000 in December 2014 to around 198,760 which was an increase of

approximately 5.2%. 77% of applications to register to vote were made online, and online registration was most popular with young people and overseas voters. As at 1 May 2015 the total number of electors on the electoral register who remained unconfirmed under IER was approximately 8.2% of the total electorate.

There was concern regarding the fall in the number of young attainments on the electoral roll nationally. Since February/March 2014 the number had fallen by around 47%, attributed by the Electoral Commission to the lack of a comprehensive canvass in 2014. The Electoral Commission believed the full HEF canvass in 2015 may redress this somewhat. Household notification letters that were sent by Lewisham Electoral Registration officers in February 2015 did not particularly attract attainments, possible due to the emphasis on the upcoming general election, for which attainments would for the most part have been too young to vote. The Electoral Commission was encouraging Electoral Registration Officers to update their engagement strategy to now focus on young attainments.

The Working Party thanked the Young Mayor and his team, and the young people on work experience placements in the Council, for their hard work during the election period. Councillor Bonavia suggested that at a future Council meeting that there be a formal item to thank them for their efforts.

The Chair raised a concern that there needed to be more resources going in to ensure that the number of unregistered electors continued to reduce. The Chair proposed an additional recommendation, that a fully costed plan for additional work, including canvassing of households be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Party, with a view to it being presented at a future meeting of the Mayor and Cabinet. The Working Party were in agreement with the additional recommendation.

The Head of Law clarified that there had not been any concerns regarding resources and officers during the election period and that a significant amount of work had been successfully undertaken to drive awareness of the election and to encourage voter registration.

Councillor Bonavia noted the financial implications in the report, and the Head of Law explained that there were additional costs associated with the General Election which were not recoverable, for example the dedicated call centre set up by the Council to handle registration queries was not considered an election expense. The rest of the costs would be reimbursed by HM Treasury.

RESOLVED that

- a) the presentation be noted; and
- b) a fully costed plan for additional work, including canvassing of households, be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Party.

The Meeting closed at 9.50 p.m.