

MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Thursday 19 July 2018 at 6pm

Present: Councillor Rathbone (Chair), Councillor John Paschoud (Vice Chair), Councillor Bernards, Councillor Jacq Paschoud

Apologies: Councillor Bonavia, Councillor Penfold.

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Councillor Rathbone was nominated and elected as Chair of the Committee
Councillor John Paschoud was nominated and elected as Vice Chair of the Committee.

2. Declarations of Interests

Councillor John Paschoud declared an interest as an Election Agent representing various Labour Party candidates at the Elections being reported at this meeting.

Councillor Jacq Paschoud declared an interest as the Returning Officer for the Elections.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Review of the 2018 May Election

The Electoral Services manager presented this report.

The report included some actions for implementation of the following election poll and count. Overall, the consensus was that Elections went well and ran smoothly. The change of location to the school particularly worked well.

The biggest challenge was the declaration of results, as a result of it taking place in a different room being an inconvenience, although there was no negative feedback surrounding this.

The overall feedback from voters was good and the turnout was higher than expected.

The PA system at the count needs some improvement in the future, as highlighted in the review report. The verification, although went well, could have ran smoother and quicker so will improve for next as outlined in the review, to sharpen practice.

On behalf of the Labour Group, the Chair expressed that the Count went very well and were well run.

Councillor Paschoud stated that the cash handling of deposits for a mayoral candidates should be moved to non-cash payments where possible, but there was

still an issue of not being able to trace payments through the Council's finance system as to where it had from and what it was for. The Head of Law suggested keep such payments separate in a different account to make them more traceable.

Members were pleased with the management structure of the elections and the project plan.

Counters generally performed well. Supervisors and DROs scored their teams counters for consideration for the next count.

The report was noted.

5. The Polling District Review 2018-19

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report.

The completed Polling District Review is due on 1 December 2019. It is the Electoral Team's intention to dedicate a lot of time for it and to be thorough. They will identify the best buildings in every single ward/district and re-write the current district plan. Voters who reside in rural areas will be taken into consideration.

Secondary schools are no longer used because of interference with exams. 42 of the buildings used for polling stations are schools. The cost of rental elsewhere is far more expensive. At some schools, the entire school is not closed where possible, if the polling station can be run adequately with the main school still open. Special schools are not currently used for elections.

The Chair asked if regarding the low turnout of local elections, efficiency and cost effectiveness, reducing the number of electoral districts and polling stations would be considered. The Electoral Manager responded that unless there is sufficient evidence to justify a reduction it cannot be proposed. The purpose to enable people to vote remains, so any proposals will be directed to this purpose.

The Committee is particularly interested in the idea of super polling stations and would like to see proposals on at some point.

The report was noted.

6. The Annual Canvass

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report.

The objective for the annual canvass is to try new strategies to improve the registration. 80% of people who register, do so outside of the canvassing period. Canvassers will be delivering more forms and doing more visits.

The first HEF (household enquiry form) will be delivered to each property at the start of August. The forms will also be sent via email to around 60,000 residents.

The approximate spend is around £170k (including all printing and postage etc., but not staffing).

The response rate last year was 87.22%. This was an increase of 15% on the previous year and this year's target is 85%.

The Elections team works with 6th forms and universities to encourage registration as well as households.

The report was noted.

The meeting finished at 7.35pm.