

Public Document Pack

Elections Committee Members

Members of the committee, listed below, are summoned to attend the meeting to be held on Thursday, 15 July 2021.

Kim Wright, Chief Executive
Wednesday 7 July 2021

Councillor Kevin Bonavia	
Councillor Juliet Campbell	
Councillor Leo Gibbons	
Councillor Jacq Paschoud	
Councillor John Paschoud	
Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin	

Elections Committee Agenda

Thursday, 15 July 2021
6.00 pm, Microsoft Teams, Webcast

For more information contact: Sarah Assibey (Tel: 0207 314 8975)

Part 1

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Agenda Item 2

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 2
Ward	n/a	
Contributors	Chief Executive	
Class	Part 1	Date: 15 July 2021

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

1 Personal interests

There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct :-

- (1) Disclosable pecuniary interests
- (2) Other registerable interests
- (3) Non-registerable interests

2 Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined by regulation as:-

- (a) Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person* for profit or gain
- (b) Sponsorship –payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union).
- (c) Undischarged contracts between a relevant person* (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works.
- (d) Beneficial interests in land in the borough.
- (e) Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more.
- (f) Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member's knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person* is a

partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest.

- (g) Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:-
- (a) that body to the member's knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough; and
 - (b) either
 - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person* has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class.

*A relevant person is the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner.

(3) Other registerable interests

The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:-

- (a) Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- (b) Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes, or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- (c) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25

(4) Non registerable interests

Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

(5) Declaration and Impact of interest on member's participation

- (a) Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any

event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take no part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000**

- (b) Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless paragraph (c) below applies.
- (c) Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.
- (d) If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- (e) Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

(6) Sensitive information

There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

(7) Exempt categories

There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:-

- (a) Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
- (b) School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor;
- (c) Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
- (d) Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
- (e) Ceremonial honours for members
- (f) Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception)

Agenda Item 3

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	MINUTES	
Key Decision	No	Item No. 3
Ward	n/a	
Contributors	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Class	Part 1	Date: 15 July 2021

Recommendation

To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee, which was open to the press and public, held on 27 June 2019

MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

27 June 2019 at 6pm

Present: Councillor Gibbons, Councillor Paschoud, Councillor Moore, Councillor Johnston-Franklin, Councillor Rathbone and Councillor Penfold

1. Election of Chair and Vice- Chair

Councillor Gibbons was elected as Chair and Councillor Paschoud was nominated a Vice Chair for the Municipal year 2019/2020

2. Minutes

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

3. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared

4. Reports to the Election Committee

On Thursday 2 May 2019 by-elections were held in Evelyn and Whitefoot Wards to elect 2 new Councillors. The by-elections were a success. The Officer detailed that. Registration was low – only 250 new names were added to the register for the by-elections. Poll cards and postal votes were sent out early. Emails were sent to all electors which received a positive response. The new polling station at Haskins Hall was a risk – it was the third venue for this district in three elections – but the feedback had been positive and it's an improvement on the previous two venues. The counts took place in the Civic Suite and were particularly quick – counting staff were excellent and a tried and tested plan ensured it was efficient, transparent and accurate. This was a good test of our by-elections plan and we believed we performed extremely well in challenging circumstances

The European Parliamentary elections were held on Thursday 23 May 2019. Particular challenges for Lewisham included the short timetable caused by the late notice of the Government to confirm we would contest the elections, and the additional responsibility on Janet Senior as the Regional Returning Officer for London.

Electoral Services will be undertaking a review of Lewisham's polling places and polling districts during the next few months. Appendix E provided details of the scope and objectives of this review, and how Councillors can contribute. It is a legal requirement to complete a review of our polling districts and places by 31 January 2020. The Officer stated it is the intention to submit this in time for the 1 December publication of the new register. The timetable will allow for the final proposals to be put to Full Council for approval in November.

The Committee will receive an update on Lewisham's Local Government Boundary Review. Appendix F provided detail on what has happened in Stage 1 and what we can expect from Stage 2 when the Council and others will be required to submit proposals for new Ward boundaries in Lewisham

The second stage follows a process for determining:

- Ward boundaries
- Numbers of Councillors per Ward
- Names of Wards

The Council, local parties, community groups and individuals will be encouraged to submit representations during an initial consultation period. The representations should include details of proposed boundaries and reasoning behind them – for example; natural boundaries, community links, town centres, transport links, etc. The Council is to make a representation via a group of Councillors and officers similar to stage 1

The LGBC will collate all representations and publish some proposals. They will seek feedback on their proposals during a second consultation period. Once the second consultation period has finished the LGBC will review all submissions and make a final decision on the boundaries. They will publish their final proposals towards the end of 2020. These are then confirmed by an Act of Parliament and will come into force during our next Council elections in 2022. A more detailed timeline will be provided to all councillors once the decision of the LGBC is received.

The Committee received a report on the plans for the 2019 electoral registration canvass. The report was noted.

Agenda Item 4

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE			
Report Title	Reports to the Election Committee on 15.7.21		
Key Decision	n/a		Item No.
Wards	All		
Contributors	Jamie Baker, Head of Electoral Services		
Class	Part 1	Date: 6 July 2021	

1. Summary

This report introduces the items to be presented to the Elections Committee to be held on 15 July 2021

2. Purpose

To review each item and advise on policies and procedures for future election and electoral registration activity. In particular:

A. Review of 2021 GLA elections and 4 Council By-elections

Provide feedback and make recommendations for 2022

B. Parliamentary Boundary Review 2021-23

Explore implications for Lewisham and recommend an approach for the second stage of the review

C. Lewisham Polling District Review

Consider the methodology, in particular the plans for consultation with Councillors and local groups

D. The Annual Electoral Registration Canvass 2021

Note the plans and targets

E. Grove Park Neighbourhood Planning Referendum

Recommend polling scheme and plans for encouraging participation and the counting of the votes

F. Preparations for 2022 Mayoral & Local elections

Review plans for these elections

3. Recommendation

That the Committee make note of each item and provide their own observations and recommendations for the boundary reviews, future Lewisham elections and registration activity.

4. Background

- 4.1 On 6 May 2021 the GLA elections were held. They had been postponed from May 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, we also held 4 by-

elections for councillors in the wards of Bellingham, Catford South, New Cross and Sydenham. These elections were a huge undertaking, requiring a significant amount of preparation above and beyond what would normally happen. The Returning Officer, Kim Wright, and the election team, have conducted a review of the election, and consider it to have been a success, but we are keen to hear the views of the election committee and any recommendations they have for future elections, particularly regarding Covid-secure procedures.

- 4.2 The Boundary Commission for England are conducting a statutory review of the Parliamentary constituencies. The initial proposals were published in the first week of June, and the consultation remains open until 2 August. The Acting Returning Officer, Kim Wright, has submitted a formal response to approve of the methodology but making little comment on the proposals themselves – due to the requirement for impartiality. The committee are asked to identify any implications for Lewisham and our approach to the second stage of the review where alternative proposals will be presented.
- 4.3 Lewisham will have new wards that come into effect in May 2022 which requires a brand new polling scheme. Our polling district review will create new polling districts in every ward. Each district will require a specified polling place. This review will be extremely thorough and detailed, and will benefit hugely from the knowledge and experience of local Councillors.
- 4.3 2021 is the second year Lewisham is required to undertake the annual electoral registration canvass using the new ‘canvass reform’ rules. This enables us to use data to identify electors and properties to focus our resources. Given the upcoming important elections in May 2022, it is vital we achieve a good canvass response and work to maximise the registration rates across the entire borough.
- 4.4 The Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan is likely to receive formal approval at Mayor & Cabinet in July. This means they will recommend the plan goes to a local referendum. Once the decision is made public, the council will have 56 days to hold the referendum. As this will be our first Neighbourhood Planning Referendum, it will be helpful to discuss the plans and issues with the Election Committee.
- 4.5 Finally, the Committee will receive a report on the plans for the 2022 Local & Mayoral elections.

5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 None.

6. **Equalities implications**

- 6.1 The delivery of elections is subject to the DDA and Equality Act provisions. In particular we must ensure there is equal access to voter registration and voting at elections.

6.2 This means that our polling places must be accessible and our postal voting processes do not unfairly discriminate against any particular group.

6.3 Our polling district review will identify polling places where the provision for people with disabilities is below acceptable levels and detail our mitigation plans. An equalities impact assessment will identify the impacts on different groups of people and make recommendations for minimum standards for polling places.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The budget for electoral services has been set and covers all planned activity. Any additional activity will require director approval for increased funding.

8. Crime and disorder implications

8.1 None.

9. Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications arising.

10. Additional documents

- A. Review of 2021 GLA elections and 4 Council By-elections
- B. Parliamentary Boundary Review 2021-23
- C. Lewisham Polling District Review
- D. The Annual Electoral Registration Canvass 2021
- E. Grove Park Neighbourhood Planning Referendum
- F. Preparations for 2022 Mayoral & Local elections

Jamie Baker

Head of Electoral Services

A – Review of 2021 GLA elections and 4 Council By-elections

Summary

- Administration of the elections were a huge challenge – due to the pandemic
- All objectives were met
 - Successful elections
 - No election petitions or challenges
 - Met all directions and performance standards
 - Applied PHE and government guidance
 - Publication of statutory notices
 - Received excellent feedback
 - Maintained a decent turnout and increased the number of postal voters

Encouraging Participation

- The service had to conduct a huge amount of preparation work to enable accessibility and to encourage participation
- All electors on the Shielding list, or aged 65 or over, sent postal vote applications via email and post
- In addition, 65k postal vote applications sent via email and 30k postal vote applications sent by post
- Total number of postal voters increased by over 10,000 – proportion rose from 12% to 18.5%
- Messaging on poll cards, social media, website and posters to explain the rule for voting in polling stations and assuring people of safety
- Decent turnout of over 40% matches the 2016 GLA elections, which strongly suggests our strategy was a success

Covid- Secure Processes

- Planning for the impact of the pandemic began in December 2019
- Lewisham worked with the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office on plans and guidance for the whole UK – to produce standards, guidance, forms, plans, best practise, etc
- Local arrangements included:
 - Risk assessments of polling places and other election venues
 - Enhanced cleaning of all venues
 - Extra polling staff in every station
 - Increased training – online only
 - 4 separate postal vote staff bubbles – to ensure resilience
 - Masses of PPE for staff and voters
 - Home working for the election team until Notice of Election was published in mid-March
 - In polling places; screens, 1-way systems, notices, single-use pencils, limits on numbers allowed inside, regular cleaning, and more
- £105k additional funding provided by the government. This will cover the vast majority of our additional expenditure. The GLA will cover the remaining election costs

Lessons Learned for Future Elections

- Large amount of data and feedback gathered post-election
- Assessments of all polling places in terms of cost, facilities, accessibility and suitability for future elections – this will greatly assist the polling district review
- Around 40% of polling staff were new – the vast majority performed well, giving us a larger and improved pool of staff for future elections
- Increase in postal voters brings us more in line with rest of London and should assist with future turnout
- Tested new process for adjudication of doubtful ballots at the count for the by-elections. This will be used for the 2022 elections
- Successful Comms campaign to be rolled out again

B – Parliamentary Boundary Review 2021-23

Timetable

March 2020	Relevant date for ward and polling district electorate figures to be used for the review
8 June 2021	BCE published initial proposals. Start of first consultation stage
2 August 2021	End of first consultation stage
Early 2022	BCE to publish all submissions to initial consultation and hold a second consultation for 6 weeks
Late 2022	BCE to publish revised proposals and hold final 4 week consultation
June 2023	BCE to submit final proposals to Parliament
July 2023	New constituencies come into force

Methodology for creating new constituencies

- Using the electorate figures from March 2020
- Wards as the building blocks – only split by polling district if necessary
- For Lewisham, they are using our new wards that will come into effect in 2022 (note we do not yet have any polling districts for these wards)
- Strict electorate quota. All constituencies must be between 69,724 and 77,062 electors
- Looking for equality of representation through constituency size
- Increase of 2 constituencies in London – 1 in South London

Role for Lewisham Council

- Our main role has been to publicise the review and to encourage local residents, groups and parties to participate
- Kim Wright, as ARO and CE for Lewisham, has submitted a short response approving the methodology, and in particular, the use of whole wards as building blocks
- The ARO is impartial and has therefore offered no comment on the proposals themselves, other than they meet the criteria as outlined in their methodology
- No intention for any other submission by the Council

- Local and national political parties are encouraged to submit responses with alternative proposals

The Initial Proposals

- 2 whole constituencies within Lewisham with a third constituency shared with Southwark
- Lewisham would be lead borough for all 3 constituencies
- Little change for Lewisham Deptford and Lewisham East
- Would like to see a change to the name of the proposed Lewisham Deptford constituency, but, as per above, the ARO has made no comment to this effect to date. In 2022 we will have a new ward called Deptford, which may confuse some electors if there is also a constituency of the same name
- We expect there will be many credible counter proposals for the South London region
- In the second consultation phase, it is likely the ARO will want to make a comment on the various counter proposals that affect Lewisham, but is unlikely to state support for any specific proposal, due to requirement for impartiality

Recommendation

- We strongly recommend Lewisham Councillors engage with their local parties to consider the proposals and to submit a response
- It is incredibly important that local parties submit a response – even if they fully support the proposals as the revised proposals will be based on submissions received

C – Lewisham Polling District Review

What is the review?

- New wards for Lewisham will come into effect on the date of the next Mayoral & Local elections on 5 May 2022
- The council must allocate polling districts and places for the new wards following a statutory review process
- The final polling scheme must be approved by Full Council

Proposed Timetable

17 September	Publication of Notice of Review
17 September	RO to publish initial proposals for consultation
22 October	End of consultation stage
3 November	RO to publish final proposals
24 November	Councillors to approve final scheme at Full Council
1 December	Electoral Register published with new districts and wards

How will electoral services produce the initial proposals?

- The new ward boundaries have been inputted into mapping software and the electoral register
- We shall review all current, former and potential venues for suitability as polling places in the new scheme
- New polling districts will be ‘drawn’ around the most preferred venues in each ward. This will create maps and statistics
- A thorough report will be produced showing the full proposals for each ward, with details of the proposed venues and statistics, as well as information on why alternative venues were not chosen and other issues encountered to be considered in the consultation
- The report will be published at the very beginning of the review on 17 September
- The consultation will be based on these proposals

Current Proposed Criteria for each polling district and place

- Polling place to be DDA compliant
- Maximum 15 minute walk for residents to reach the polling place. Maximum of 10 minutes where possible
- Schools not to be used where suitable alternative is possible
- No splitting of streets except for long main roads
- Good facilities for polling staff
- Size of polling place to enable at least 2 polling stations wherever possible – to allow for expansion and resilience

Consultation

- We aim to consult with as many residents and local groups as possible
- Legally required to contact local groups with expertise in accessibility and disability
- Direct contact with local parties
- Potential for an online public meeting if there is enough interest
- Media campaign via social media to help raise awareness of the proposals

Consultation with Councillors

- Would like advice from the Election Committee on how we engage with Councillors
- Currently we plan to contact the members to request 1 meeting per ward. At these meetings, we’ll look at the maps, potential venues, street layouts, and statistics, for that particular ward
- Councillors have detailed local knowledge that we are hoping to use to revise the initial proposals
- All meetings to be minuted with the records made public as part of the consultation

Final Proposals

- The RO is responsible for producing final proposals that will go to Full Council for approval

- These proposals will be very much based on feedback obtained during the consultation, including the meetings with Councillors
- Final proposals to be shared with Councillors in draft form in advance of the publication date with a small window for amendments. It is hoped that the proposals will receive unanimous support from Councillors and where we believe there could be disagreement we will seek additional meetings with relevant members

D – The Annual Electoral Registration Canvass 2021

- This is our second canvass under the new legislation
- Essentially, canvass reform has split our register into 2 groups of properties. Each group follows a different ‘route’. The register is matched against national data, such as DWP. Electors are given a match rating to show where they match their name and address with national data. Their match status dictates the route the property will take
 - Route 1 – these are properties where all electors have been matched 100%. These properties are almost certainly ‘no-change’. A letter must be sent to the property. The property does not have to respond but is able to make corrections if necessary
 - Route 2 – these are properties that either have no electors, or where they have 1 or more electors that did not match against national data. These properties must complete and return a canvass form
- The 2020 canvass saw a very decent response, despite the pandemic, and despite the inability to conduct a doorknock (PHE and risk assessments prevented us from doing household visits)
- We also worked with ONS on the census and gained valuable insight into how they managed to obtain such a good response (91%)
- Wherever possible we are using email and telephone to send forms to residents. Online responses are cheaper, quicker, and more reliable (no manual data entry onto the register)
- At least 2 paper forms sent to all route 2 properties who don’t respond online, followed up by 6 weeks of door-knocking by 100 canvassers
- Target for 15,000 additions and deletions from the register by 1 December 2021
- In early February, we’ll conduct a mini-canvass. All properties will be sent the form again, and encouraged to check that it is still accurate
- This will encourage more registrations and ensure the register is as accurate and complete as possible before the 2022 elections

E – Grove Park Neighbourhood Planning Referendum

- Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted and approved by the external examiner with one small change

- Due to the change, it now requires Mayor & Cabinet approval before the Director of Planning can move for a referendum
- Once approval has been given, and notice of decision to move for a referendum has been published, we will be able to begin the referendum timetable
- We are hoping to hold the referendum as soon as possible – August or September
- No information yet on the progress of other neighbourhood forums except that they are not imminent for referendum

F – Preparations for 2022 Mayoral & Local elections

- Register data for new wards already available – but not 100% accurate
- Register to be published on 1 December using new ward and polling district scheme
- Currently no guidance or advice on whether any Covid protocols will be required in May 2022 – if they are, it will be the counting of the votes where we'll have the biggest problems
- Registration promotion activity to begin in January
- Current plan is for the counting of the votes to happen on the day after polling day (Friday) as per 2018
- Knights Academy as the proposed count centre.
- The count will follow similar model to 2018 but with some improvements/refinements with the objective of declaring all results by 4pm
- Does the Election Committee have any views or requests for the administration of the 2022 elections?