

MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday 15 July 2021 at 6pm

Present: Councillor John Paschoud, Councillor Jacq Paschoud, Councillor Campbell, Councillor Bonavia, Councillor Johnston-Franklin

Apologies: Councillor Gibbons

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Councillor John Paschoud was elected Chair of the Committee for the municipal year 21/22. Councillor Bonavia was elected Vice Chair.

2. Declarations of interest

Councillor Paschoud and Councillor Bonavia declared that they were election agents for their party at the recent election.

3. Minutes

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

4. Reports to the Elections Committee

This item was presented by the Head of Electoral Services. He had summarised the content of the report which discussed the following items:

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

The Committee reviewed each item, commenting on the policies and procedures for future election and electoral registration activity.

Discussing the GLA Election and By-elections, Councillor Bonavia asked what could be done in the future regarding the long queues that started to form due to restricted measures caused by COVID-19. The Head of Electoral Services stated that the two polling stations which developed queues were double and triple stationed and that next time, reducing the number of voters allocated to those stations within the polling district and identify other alternative venue to send more people.

There was a higher number of postal votes this year. Applications for postal votes met all legal standards and integral regulations. Residents were encouraged via email to vote via post.

Lewisham's main role was to publicise the Parliamentary Boundary Review and to encourage local residents, groups and parties to participate. Kim Wright, as ARO and CE for Lewisham, submitted a short response approving the methodology, and in particular, the use of whole wards as building blocks. The ARO, being impartial, offered no comment was offered on the proposals themselves, other than that they met the criteria as outlined in their methodology. The officer stated that it was important that Lewisham Councillors engaged with their local parties to consider the proposals and to submit a response and also it was incredibly important that local parties submitted a response.

Discussing the Polling District Review, Members noted that the timeline outlined in the report seems viable. Councillors pointed out issues to be considered such as accessibility at the polling stations and disability awareness of staff.

Mayor & Cabinet had approved the Neighbourhood Plan so the Director of Planning can move for a Grove Park Neighbourhood Planning Referendum. The Grove Park area does not just encompass Grove Park, but also includes 500 electors from Whitefoot and 700 from Downham, which creates a challenge in managing the referendum, whereby some of the COVID protocols will be implemented. Members agreed that 4 polling places in Grove Park would be practical, but noted that communication of this change was important. Statutory information is available to electors.

The officer asked Members for their feedback on the count centre being Knight's Academy for the 2022 Mayoral and Local Election and explained the Count process over the 2 allocated days. Members were satisfied with the plans.

The meeting finished at 7.15pm