

# MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Monday 11 July 2022 at 6pm

Present: Councillor Paschoud, Councillor Cooper, Councillor Parry, Councillor Warner, Councillor Walsh

In attendance virtually: Councillor Bernards

Apologies: Councillor Stamrowski and Councillor Millbank

Also present: Councillor Jacq Paschoud

## 1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

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

The Vice-Chair of the Committee will be nominated and elected at the next Committee.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Paschoud and Councillor Cooper declared that they are election agents for Labour Party and Co-op Party.

## 3. Minutes

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

## 4. Elections Act

The Head of Electoral Services presented this report.

He stated that one of the implications of the changes to the Act is that it may cause reluctance to vote from residents. He stated that the Council would need to plan carefully communication, the requirement for voter ID, and how best to prepare residents so that nobody is unable to vote at future elections because of this measure. There were no statutory instruments, so no guidance, process or specifics about how to implement voter ID amongst other things.

The Head of Electoral Services summarised the contents of the report. The report provided information on the Act, the implications, recommended mitigations, and potential resource implications. It also included a timetable demonstrating the implementation of different events. He stated that more research needed to be done to accurately assess the impact on residents: how many will not have the appropriate ID and how many will need to obtain ID from the Council, digitally or in person.

The following was also discussed:

Another impact of voter ID discussed was the increase of time it would take to vote at polling stations. This would cause a need to increase the number of polling stations and staff of which a consultation and approval from full Council would be required.

Another change was the improvement of support in polling stations for people with a wider range of disabilities through a general responsibility on ROs to provide equipment to support disabled people to vote. The resource implication discussed was budget pressure on resourcing all the necessary equipment.

The automatic right of European citizens to register to vote, to vote, and to stand in local elections will be removed. This will mean that all EU citizens on the electoral register will need to have their eligibility to be registered reviewed, at a point after the legislation comes into force, with those determined to have become ineligible - under the new provisions - being removed from the electoral register.

The Committee then discussed the resource implications for the change for overseas voters which was that it was predicted that there is going to be more work than previously. At Parliamentary elections the number of overseas electors tends to double from 750 to 1500. These figures have been rising at each election.

It was asked if there was any extra funding that came with the legislation to take the strain off local authority budgets. The officer responded that the full cost for implementation is said to be paid for by the government.

Councillor Jacq Paschoud spoke under standing orders. She made the point that there is a positive with the identification changes in that Freedom Passes would be accepted, which is well taken up in the Borough. However, documentation is not always common even among voting adults. Many will be concerned about applying for documents and may not make the effort- turn out is low enough, and this change will effect young people disproportionately. She also mentioned the changes to aid accessibility will not do as much for those with disabilities as perhaps estimated. Much of the willingness to vote and the aid at polling stations is down to the good nature of polling staff at Lewisham.

The report was noted.

## **5. Reports to the Elections Committee**

The Head of Electoral Services presented this item

The Committee discussed the policies and procedures for future election and electoral registration activity of the following:

### **A. Review of 2022 Mayoral and Local Elections**

It was said that more staff and/or time needed for proof-checking of all electoral Documents. The final session of postal votes needed to be more heavily resourced. The adjudication of postal votes could be quicker.

Before the next election, an action point was to investigate new count venues for 2024 as a much bigger space would be needed for a GLA manual count. The

cost of some stations is also now very high so consideration of the cost of those polling stations will need to be given.

B. The Annual Electoral Registration Canvass 2022

The Committee noted the plans and targets

C. The Elections Act 2022 – including Voter ID

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting

It was agreed that another meeting will be scheduled so the Committee can discuss the representations needed to be made to the government and the risk management measures that can be made to place within the team

The meeting finished at 7.07pm