

**APPENDIX B****LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM**

MINUTES of the meeting of the ELECTIONS COMMITTEE, which was open to the press and public, held on MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2010 at LEWISHAM TOWN HALL, CATFORD, SE6 4RU at 6 p.m.

**Present**

Councillors Owolabi-Oluyole (Chair), Bowen, Curran, Hall, Paschoud and Peake

<u>Minute No.</u>		<u>Action</u>
1.	<b><u>ELECTION OF CHAIR</u></b>	
	RESOLVED	that Councillor Owlabi-Oluyole be elected Chair and Councillor Bowen elected Vice Chair of the Committee.
2.	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b> (page	
	RESOLVED	that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee, which was open to the press and public, held on 28 January 2010 be confirmed and signed.
3.	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS</u></b> (page	
	None	
4.	<b><u>ELECTORAL AGENDA: THE NEXT 5 YEARS</u></b> (page and appendices at page	
4.1	The Head of Law presented the report to the committee. The Head of Law provided the Committee with an outline of anticipated referendums, elections, statutory reviews and relevant legislative changes over the next five years (2010 – 2015) and their impact on Lewisham’s forthcoming electoral agenda.	
4.2	Councillor Hall asked whether local resources in the borough will be able to cope with the anticipated change. The Head of Law replied that Lewisham has a staffing budget for elections and for canvass. However funding for election is submitted and reimbursed from Cabinet /or GLA if it is regional. Every four years Lewisham has to pay for its local election. The Chief Executive continued that there will not be a budget reduction for this area, but that an increase was unlikely.	
4.3	Councillor Paschoud raised concern about how the Individual Electoral	

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Registration (IER) will work in practical terms in the borough and suggested that support be given to people with Learning Disabilities.

- 4.4 With regards to canvassing, Cllr Hall asked what Lewisham can further do to publicise the need for people to register. The Head of Law replied that there are a range of things on-going to ensure this.
- 4.5 Councillor Curran inquired about the role of the Election's Committee and its ability to affect decisions brought before them, specifically on how it can make a submission to the GLA on matters raised in the meeting. The Chief Executive replied that currently there is no legislation underpinning proposed electoral changes, as it is not yet a Bill. However he welcomed the possibility of making a submission to the GLA or other responsible bodies.
- 4.6 Councillor Curran asked for the definition of excessive Council tax. The Head of Law explained that it is that the Secretary of State should have powers to set any principal rises in Council tax, likely to be zero and any local authority that exceed this will have to offer a referendum, and can therefore only increase if local people agree.
- 4.7 Councillor Hall requested that the committee be kept informed on work being done on ward boundary changes by the Boundary Commission. The Chief Executive replied that all work in this area will be referred to the committee when received. The Committee suggested that even though the issues under discussion were not executive matters, the Mayor & Cabinet be informed of the implications of all changes as they could have an impact on future decision making.

RESOLVED The committee AGREED the following additional proposals:

1. election officers to do further publicity work for Canvass 2010
  2. the Committee to meet in January 2011 to review progress and to receive further update
  3. seek consultation on all future electoral changes, especially on boundary changes
  4. lobby the LEA / or the necessary department responsible for electoral changes and also lobby for practical help for people with Learning Disability on IER
5. CANVASS 2010 (Page and Appendix at page
- 5.1 The Electoral Services Manger presented the report. This report provided the Committee with a review of Lewisham's Electoral Registration processes particularly the Annual Household Registration Audit , commonly

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- known as the Canvass, and reviews the steps taken to address completeness and integrity in compiling the register.
- 5.2 With regards to the number of voids, Councillor Paschoud asked whether Lewisham's figures are high in comparison to other London Borough. The Electoral Services Manager replied that the figures are comparable to that of Tower Hamlet, Southwark and Hackney. Records used are of registered residents, and this can be cross referenced only by information held by the Authority, such as council tax, the Electoral Registration Officer has ability to utilise external agencies.
- 5.3 The Chair asked what was being done between now and December to achieve last year's canvass rate of 92%. The Electoral Services Manager replied that canvass is ahead of last year's figures around the same time. 700 responses are received daily and this is likely to increase. Canvassers will knock on doors of non responding properties from the 29 October. There are daily checks in place to ensure that canvassers perform properly.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

- 6 REVIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY, MAYORAL AND LOCAL ELECTION IN MAY 2010 (Page and Appendix at page
- 6.1 Following a request made by the Chief Executive, the Director of Programme Management & Property presented the report. This report provides the Committee with a review of the administration of the Parliamentary, Local Government and Mayoral elections, held on 6 May 2010 within the London Borough of Lewisham (LBL). The Director of Programme management and Property highlighted the long hours worked by poll clerks may have taken a toll on their performance and stated that a review of presiding officers and poll clerks is needed and a possible second shift of counting staff should be considered.
- 6.2 Councillor Paschoud praised the comprehensive analysis of the report and commended all officers involved in the May 2010 election. The Committee praised the absence of fraud during the elections.
- 6.3 Councillor Curran raised concerns with polling station signage and asked that this be improved to give clearer directions and information. He described instances where voters had been mis-directed by signage. The Head of Law asked Councillor Curran to provide details on where this is a problem so that it can be resolved. The Chief executive acknowledged the signage was outdated and he reported on suggestions he had made to the Design Council for more appropriate modern signage.
- 6.4 Councillor Paschoud raised concern on the high number of spoilt ballot in

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the Mayoral elections and stated that from his observation it appeared that voters did not understand what was required.

- 6.5 Councillor Paschoud further stated that officers were not following instructions relating to the postal vote process whereby some teams were having difficulty in recovering ballot papers that had failed the automated Postal Vote Identifier check, resulting in delays, he suggested a possible review on how this process works.

**RESOLVED**

The committee **AGREED** the following additional proposals:

1. The Election Committee to oversee the council's Lobbying of central government
2. The Director of Programme Management & Property to look again at the issue of data management
3. Polling station signage to be reviewed in order to improve current status
4. Review Postal Vote opening process in relation to recovering rejected ballot papers. find ways to redress and reduce the large number of spoilt Mayoral ballot papers.

The meeting ended at 8.20p.m.

Chair