

Subject to approval at the next meeting

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

29 October 2013 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors Gammon (Chairman), L Brown (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Brooks [from Minute 5], Mrs Brown, Dendle and Northeast.

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Oppler.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2013 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of the list of those present to replace Councillor Chapman's name as Chairman to read Councillor Gammon.

13. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chairman reported that a request had been received to change the order of the agenda and the Committee agreed as the Chief Executive had advised of his need to leave early.

14. FIRST STAGE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

The Chief Executive presented to the Sub-Committee a report which explained the approach to be taken to the 2013-2015 review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations. It was reported that the Council had begun the first stage of the review process with effect from 1st October 2013. Members received a schedule of the Polling Stations that will be used for the European Parliamentary election in May 2014 and a timetable for the review.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the review would focus on polling locations and venues with consultation from 1st October 2013 to 31st July 2014. It was reported that the consultation would seek the views of MP's, Councillors, Local Returning Officers at Worthing & Adur Borough Council and Horsham District Council, the public through Parish, Post Office, library, website notices and through a survey following the European Election in May 2014. The Sub-Committee were pleased to note that the Arun Access

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Group had been consulted with, to gain the views of those with disabilities, and would be considering the subject at their next meeting.

The Sub-Committee discussed the location of some of the current polling stations with respect to ward boundaries, attendance figures and accessibility. The Sub-Committee then

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Returning Officer's report on the Stage 1 review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the Arun district be supported and implemented for elections held on 22 May 2014; and
- (2) the 2013/15 timetable for the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within the Arun district be adopted.

15. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – REQUEST FROM FELPHAM AND YAPTON PARISH COUNCILS

The Head of Policy & Partnerships reminded the Sub-Committee of the decision that had been made at Full Council on 23 October 2013 to carry out a community governance review of Felpham and Yapton Parish Councils. He now wished to explain how the review would be taken forward and the role that the Sub-Committee would take in the process.

It was explained that the review would consider proposals to alter the parish boundaries between Yapton, Ford and Middleton-on-Sea. The next step would be a report to Full Council on 8 January 2014 when terms of reference for the review would be considered.

The Head of Policy & Partnerships was proposing that the Sub-Committee undertake the review and make recommendations to Full Council. The timetable for the review was outlined and it was explained that the aim was for the final recommendations to be made to the Council Meeting on 5 November 2014 to allow for implementation of any changes ahead of the elections in May 2015. This would mean that the Sub-Committee would agree these recommendations at their meeting on 9 October 2014.

It was proposed that the Sub-Committee would receive a presentation at their next meeting on 20 March 2014 from Yapton and Felpham Parish Councils about their proposals plus any views from Ford and Middleton-On-Sea.

The Sub-Committee discussed the review and asked if many houses would be affected by the proposed boundary changes. The Head of Policy & Partnerships answered that the proposals would not affect many houses but the views of people who lived within a proposed boundary change would be sought. It was explained that a new housing development would fall within a different Parish boundary should the proposals be accepted. A question was

asked about the cost of the review and it was confirmed that a separate budget would not be required as existing officers would be used to facilitate the process. It was also confirmed that consultation costs would be kept to a minimum by using cost effective communication methods.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Policy & Partnerships for his verbal report and agreed to proceed with the review as requested.

16. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The Head of Democratic Services provided the Sub-Committee with a verbal update on:

- the progress with the Annual Canvass for the Register of Electors; and
- progress with the transition to the Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

It was explained that the 2013/14 canvass had started on 1st October 2013 and would run until the new register was published on 17 February 2014. From the initial delivery of forms across the District, the Council had received a response rate to date that was around 2% lower than the same period last year but the Head of Democratic Services was hopeful that the response rate would improve from the activities planned.

The next stage was the delivery of 1st reminders to non-responding households. Delivery would be via Royal Mail rather than canvasser to trial whether this achieved a more positive response rate. Final reminders would be delivered by canvasser from the end of December to early February 2014 to properties that continued to not respond and this would be when the Council carried out house to house enquiries as required by legislation.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that registration would continue to be promoted through articles in the Arun Times and regular press releases at the key delivery stages. An information leaflet had also been provided with this year's forms to highlight the use of telephone, internet and text services as a simple way to advise of no change to current details. Additionally work had been undertaken with all local councils in Sussex on a joint promotional campaign that involved a regular advert on Heart FM Radio from 9 October to 15 October 2013 and a full page advertisement in the Argus on 26 October 2013. It was reported that as the promotional campaign was jointly funded by the local councils advertising costs had been minimal. The Head of Democratic Services stated that these activities would be reviewed against the response rate to see what had been most effective.

The Head of Democratic Services then informed the Sub-Committee on the progress with the transition to IER. She explained that work continued to review local data matching methods based on information gained from the 'dry run' organised by the Cabinet Office. The Technology Team had been able to develop a software solution to allow data matching across a number of Council records – Council Tax, Housing, Local Land &

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Property Gazetteer. It was noted that this had been extremely helpful and through the Cabinet Office this software had been offered as a solution for other Councils in the South East.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that the next stage would be the Cabinet Officer Minister for Cities and Constitution, Greg Clark MP, to decide whether or not to sign the commencement order required to move ahead with the introduction of IER in June 2014. The Sub-Committee was informed that the decision should be announced in November 2013. At this time Councils should also be notified of the grant from the Cabinet Office for 2014/15 for implementation of IER.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Sub-Committee would be kept informed of progress with both the transition to IER and the outcome of the Canvass.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Democratic Services for her report and noted the update.

17. STANDING FOR ELECTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM –
CONSULTATION PAPER FROM THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The Sub-Committee received a consultation paper from the Electoral Commission which sought the view of Members on a number of questions relating to candidates standing for election. The Head of Democratic Services asked Members of the Sub-Committee to consider whether they would like to submit a collective response on behalf of all Members or choose to respond individually.

The Sub-Committee discussed the consultation and debated the best response method. It was agreed that Members should be given the choice to respond individually or to forward their comments to the Committees Team to collate and forward on their behalf. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to investigate whether an on-line response facility was available and to advise Members when informing them of the consultation document.

During the discussion, questions were asked about the process for registering a political party and declaring donations, which the Head of Democratic Services responded to at the meeting. It was agreed that she would provide the questioner with contact details for the Electoral Commission who managed this process.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Democratic Services for her report and noted the update.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Sub-Committee noted its dates for future meetings as set out in the Calendar of Meetings for 2013/2014 and 2014/15.

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The Sub-Committee agreed the additional meeting to be held on Thursday, 18 September 2014.

(The meeting concluded at 6.47 pm)