

*Subject to approval at the next meeting*

## ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

11 October 2016 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors Gammon (Chairman), Charles (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Brooks and Chapman.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Brown and Purchase.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer has advised Members of interim arrangements to follow when making declarations of interest. They have been advised that for the reasons explained below, they should make their declarations on the same basis as the former Code of Conduct using the descriptions of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

#### Reasons

- The Council has adopted the government's example for a new local code of conduct, but new policies and procedures relating to the new local code are yet to be considered and adopted.
- Members have not yet been trained on the provisions of the new local code of conduct.
- The definition of Pecuniary Interests is narrower than the definition of Prejudicial Interests, so by declaring a matter as a Prejudicial Interest, that will cover the requirement to declare a Pecuniary Interest in the same matter.

Where a Member declares a "Prejudicial Interest" this will, in the interest of clarity for the public, be recorded in the Minutes as a Prejudicial and Pecuniary Interest.

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

### 3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2015 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. START TIMES

The Sub-Committee

RESOLVED

That its start times for meetings during the remainder of 2016/2017 be 6.00 pm.

5. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION - UPDATE

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report from the Chief Executive and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) setting out the significant changes that had been made to the electoral registration process since 2014 with the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The report highlighted a number of issues and it reviewed the impact of the two polls held in 2016 on the electoral register. The Sub-Committee was also updated on arrangements for the 2016 annual canvass.

The introduction of IER had presented five significant issues for the electoral services team to overcome, these were:

- Understanding of the registration process
- 'Carry Forward' Electors
- Further changing legislation
- Cabinet Office funding
- Resourcing levels

Each of these issues was explained in more detail by the Head of Democratic Services at the meeting.

Looking at the Electoral Register, the Sub-Committee was advised that there had been a 4% increase to electorate levels as a result of the EU Referendum. The impact in managing two major polls in such a short timeframe had been a major burden for the team in terms of the registration deadline for the Referendum being extended and the high public interest in this poll. This had resulted in a significant interest in absent voting and those applying for proxy votes.

The Sub-Committee was advised that the Annual Canvass for 2016 was underway ahead of publishing a revised register on 1 December 2016. To date the response rate was sitting at just under 80% at 79.94% which was good news for this stage of the canvass. In comparison to last year, this showed an 8% increase in responses at both the first and final reminder stage and equated to a £9k saving on postage costs. By using canvassers visiting properties that had failed to respond at the second reminder stage it was hoped that an 90% response rate could be achieved.

Having been asked to comment on the report, the Chief Executive and ERO wished to have placed on record his thanks to the Head of Democratic Services and her team for the hard work undertaken in ensuring that the two elections held had been well managed and had run with few complaints received.

The Chairman responded stating that he too, on behalf of the Sub-Committee, wished to congratulate the Democratic Services team for managing two successful polls and he requested that these messages of thanks be passed onto the rest of the team.

In discussing the report, several questions were asked. The first related to the change in the computer system used for IER and in view of the problems that had been experienced with the old system. The Head of Democratic Services outlined the change that had been made to suppliers and that this was enabling the team to bring in streamlined processes.

A question was asked relating to how EU Electors would be dealt with post Brexit. The Head of Democratic Services outlined that no instruction had as yet been provided. Finally, reference was made to the Parish Poll held in Bognor Regis in April 2016 and whether any changes had been made to the legislation in place for requesting such polls. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the legislation for Parish Polls dated back to 1987 and that although a review had been ongoing for a while now nothing had yet been confirmed.

The Sub-Committee then noted the contents of the report and the updates provided at the meeting.

## 6. ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Head of Democratic Services which advised that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had concluded its review of the electoral arrangements for West Sussex County Council and had published its final recommendations.

The final recommendations had confirmed the Commission's draft recommendations for the 13 electoral divisions in the Arun District in all but one area. These illustrated that:

- Arundel & Wick – had been renamed to Arundel & Courtwick and retained an area to the south of the A259 with Littlehampton town rather than this being moved into Arundel & Courtwick
- Bersted – a change had been made to the southern boundary to follow the boundary of Pevensey and Marine wards
- Bognor Regis West & Aldwick – a change had been made to the north eastern boundary to follow the boundary of Pevensey and Marine wards

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- Littlehampton Town – a change had been made retaining the area to the south of the A259 as referred to above in Arundel & Courtwick

The report also recommended consequential changes to the parish wards of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton.

The final stage of the review process was for the LGBCE to seek approval to their recommendations by Parliament through a draft Order. This would allow the new electoral arrangements to be in place for the forthcoming West Sussex County Council Elections in May 2017. The implementation of the consequential parish warding arrangements would not come into effect until the next planned Parish Elections in May 2019.

Having noted the final recommendations made, the Sub-Committee was advised that the electoral register would be reviewed to update the changes ahead of its next publication on 1 December 2016.

7. INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR NEW PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Head of Democratic Services outlining the initial proposals as published by the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituencies in England.

As these proposals affected three constituencies within the Arun District, the Sub-Committee was asked if it wished to consider making any form of representation to the Commission on their proposals and by the deadline date of 5 December 2016.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that the impact on the Arun District as a result of the initial proposals was very small. The changes for the area were:

- The Barnham District Ward would move from the Arundel & South Downs constituency into the Bognor Regis & Littlehampton constituency affecting the polling districts of AALD, ABAR and AEAS; and
- The AANGS polling district would move from the Arundel & South Downs constituency into the Worthing West constituency.

In discussing the proposals, the main observation made by the Sub-Committee was that this meant that the Bognor Regis & Littlehampton constituency was now at the top-end in terms of electorate numbers. This was because the review had been undertaken based on electoral data from 1 December 2015 and did not take into account projections for future development in the area which could take this constituency over the maximum electorate number of 78,507. The Head of Democratic Services outlined that she had queried this issue with the Commission and had been advised that this approach was based on statute and could therefore not be changed.

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In discussing this further and having heard that the Council's three Members of Parliament were content with the proposals, the Sub-Committee's view was that a response should be sent to the Boundary Commission confirming that the Council supported these initial recommendations.

Finally, a comment was made on the lack of detail in the maps provided by the Commission and the Head of Democratic Services was asked if any formal representation had been made about this. She confirmed that the Commission did not provide any further information or data than the maps available from their web site.

The Sub-Committee

RESOLVED

That a formal representation confirming that the Council supported the initial recommendations for the new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries be made by the Head of Democratic Services by the deadline of 5 December 2016.

8. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Sub-Committee noted its next meeting date as 31 January 2017.

(The meeting concluded at 6.40 pm)