

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

28 January 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Oppler (Chairman), Jones (Vice-Chair), Bower, Goodheart, Roberts (Substitute for Mrs Cooper) and Tilbrook

Apologies: Councillor Mrs Cooper

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations made.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2020 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and it was agreed that these would be signed by the Chairman as soon as practicably possible.

3. CANVASS REPORT 2020

The Group Head of Policy provided members with an overview of the outcomes from her report that resulted from the 2019 Canvass Reform Regulations. She explained that 50,000 fewer responses had been received as electors were no longer required to make a return under certain circumstances. This helped with the overall reduction in cost (30% less this year) as well as a reduction in the amount of time spent processing returns.

She went on to explain that at the start it was a complicated process, which was time consuming in terms of ensuring that the changes had been fully understood by the team. This was also executed alongside the preparation and execution of the snap general election in 2019 and the, now, postponed elections that were due to be held in 2020 but were delayed due to the pandemic. Another success was that 90% of the responses came in via our automated systems, where people were preferring to complete transaction online in a bid to reduce the amount of post they were handling during the pandemic. The process did not work well for Care homes and Nursing homes understandably this has not been a priority for them over the last 12 months.

The Chairman thanked the Group Head of Policy and the Elections team for the hard work that had gone into completing this work. Members sought clarification from the Group Head of Policy in reference to the 90% automated systems response rate documented within the report and what did that equate to in numbers opposed to a percentage, it was clarified that in Appendix 1 it showed that the percentage was equal to 13/14,000 responses.

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The Sub-Committee noted the report and

RESOLVED

That the Electoral Registration Officer continues to implement changes as necessary to the 2021 Canvass process for Arun District Council

4. ELECTIONS UPDATE FOR MAY 2021

The Chief Executive provided members of the Sub-Committee with an overview of his report. He explained that Coronavirus had been the biggest challenge whilst preparing for the up-coming election. Furthermore, it had, had an impact on the number of staff who had now declined to work the election this year. He advised that ensuring all staff had the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was vital to safety of staff and those using the Polling Stations to vote. To ensure that the Polling stations and the equipment used remained safe throughout the day of the election there would be additional cleaning of each Polling Station that would need to be completed by the polling staff which would be a challenge on the day. The Council had seen an increase in the number of voters requesting a postal vote, which was encouraging to see as this would be the safest way to vote this year. Another challenge was that a number of Polling stations that would usually be used, did not meet the Covid compliance criteria and therefore could not be used, reducing the number of overall Polling Stations available.

Members then took part in a debate where the following points were made:

- A member was opposed to any further delay with the Election, albeit understood the restrictions and challenges that Covid-19 presented.
- It was also advised that there had been a possible date of mid-February that a decision would be made by Central Government on if the Elections would be going ahead and it was suggested that it might be ideal to wait until then before spending any further money on this.
- Postal Voting was deemed by another member as the safest way to hold the Election and was there any discussion being had about moving the Election to an all-electronic process

The Chief Executive responded to all points raised and gave detailed answers to the questions that were asked based on the latest Government information he had at the time of this meeting.

The Sub-Committee then noted the report.

5. PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

The Group Head of Policy confirmed to members that the Parliamentary Boundary Review had been delayed and then referred members to the update that had been circulated with the agenda from the Boundary Commission for England.

Subject to approval at the next Electoral Review Sub-Committee meeting

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(The meeting concluded at 6.34 pm)