

DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

13 March 2013

Commenced: 8.30am

Terminated: 9.30am

Present: Councillors Cooney (Chair), Fairfoull, J. Fitzpatrick K. Quinn, Taylor, Ward and Warrington

Apology for Councillor Bell

Absence:

25. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2012 be accepted as a correct record subject.

26. MOBILE POLLING STATIONS

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (Governance) detailing the options for replacing the remaining 11 mobile polling stations, together with the available options for dealing with polling stations which were in buildings that would no longer be usable for future elections.

Members were reminded that for the Police and Crime Commissioner Election in November 2012 there had been 103 polling stations, of which 11 were mobile polling stations and although the number of mobile polling stations had been reduced the number was still considered high in comparison to other local authority areas. It was further reported that the total cost of providing 103 polling stations (excluding staff and stationery) was £65,000 of which approximately £40,000 related to mobile polling stations.

Furthermore, in addition to the significant cost of providing mobile polling stations there were also issues around access to mobile polling stations with regard to the ramps now being fairly old, damaged, worn and difficult to attach to the portacabins. There were continuing issues with vandalism, with 8 out of the 11 mobile polling stations being affected with issues immediately prior to the start of the poll in November 2012, which could have compromised the conduct of the poll without effective intervention.

It was, therefore very difficult to justify the use of a mobile polling stations when assessing risks and voter experience, in addition to the significant costs associated with the use of mobile polling stations. The mobile polling stations used at the PCC were:-

DENNE3	Mobile at Tame Street, Recreation Ground, Denton
DENS3	St John Fisher R.C Primary School, Manor Road, Denton
DROYE6	Mobile on Land at Mellor Street, Droylsden
DU/ST3	Astley Sports College, West Car Park, Yew Tree Lane, Dukinfield
DU/ST4	Mobile at Booth Close and High Street, Stalybridge
LDAL2	Mobile at The Chapman Arms, Stockport Road, Hyde
MOSS1	Mobile at Junction of Cheshire Street/Staley Road, Mossley
MOSS5	Mobile at Roaches Lock Inn, Manchester Road, Mossley
STMIC6	Mobile at Palace Road, off Queens Road, Ashton-under-Lyne
WAT3	Mobile at March Hare Public House, Crowhill Road, Ashton-under-Lyne
WER3	Mobile at Cheetham Fold Post Office, Cheetham Fold Road, Hyde

It had been agreed at the last Working Group that the Returning Officer should use permanent facilities at St John Fisher and Astley Sports College for future elections, this would therefore reduce the number of mobiles to nine.

Details were given of the recent changes to polling districts and polling stations which had been agreed prior to the PCC Election and endorsed at the last Council meeting and that these changes be agreed as permanent changes other than the change for Hyde Godley where the polling station for GOD1 should revert to Godley Community Primary School, with a further review being undertaken to determine an alternative configuration of polling stations in the Droylsden East Ward.

Particular reference was made to options for replacing mobile polling stations, together with the buildings which would no longer be available and it was –

AGREED:

- (1) That Members re-iterate the desire to have no mobile polling stations whilst acknowledging that there would be local circumstances that meant there may be no option but to have a mobile polling station;
- (2) That Members agree the proposals for replacing the following as set out in section 3 of the report:
 - DENS3: St John Fisher R.C. Primary School, Manor Road, Denton;
 - DU/ST3: Astley Sports College, Yew Tree Lane, Dukinfield;
- (3) That the following options for replacing the existing mobile polling stations be agreed for further investigation:

POLLING STATION NUMBER	EXISTING SITE FOR MOBILE POLLING STATION	NEW LOCATION OF POLLING STATION
DENNE3:	Tame Street Recreation Ground, Denton;	Thorpe House, Denton – Councillor Taylor to discuss with New Charter Housing Trust
DROYE6:	Land at Mellor Street, Droylsden	To remain the same
DU/ST4:	Junction of Booth Close and High Street, Stalybridge;	Use the newsagents where the mobile was situated. Councillor Taylor to meet with the shop owner.
LDAL2:	Chapman Arms, Stockport Road, Hattersley;	Ken Ward Sports Centre
MOSS1:	Junction of Cheshire Street/Staley Road;	Merge with MOSS2 and polling station to be moved to Mossley Youth Base.
MOSS5:	Roaches Lock Inn, Manchester Road, Mossley;	Assess if move to the Fire Station Day Nursery, Manchester Road, Mossley was possible.
STMIC6:	Palace Road, off Queens Road, Ashton-under-Lyne;	Merge STMIC6 with STMICH1 retaining the polling station at Hurst Community Centre.
WAT3:	March Hare Public House, Crowhill	Assess viability of move to the Mormon Church on Patterdale

	Road, Ashton-under-Lyne;	Road, Ashton-under-Lyne or shops on Crowhill Road.
WER3:	Cheetham Fold Post Office, Cheetham Fold Road, Hyde.	To look at the possibility of moving to the Convenience Store adjacent to the current site of the mobile polling station.

- (4) That Members consider the change of polling station from Duke Street Centre to the Victoria Centre
- (5) That Members endorse the proposal that Dukinfield Community Centre be replaced as a polling station by Dukinfield Library with some electors being moved to Dukinfield Town Hall where this is more convenient.

27. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION AND ADMINISTRATION ACT 2013

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (Governance) detailing the contents of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 which had received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013. The Act provided for the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER) together with a number of other changes to electoral administration and registration.

Details were given of the change to Individual Registration which would mean that electors would be registered individually instead of by household and a new system of verifying applications to be included on the electoral register would be established; secondary legislation would make provision for information that electors would have to provide in order to be registered under the new system, which would include date of birth, signature and National Insurance Number. There would be large scale data matching of information held by the Electoral Registration Officer with data held by the Department of Work and Pensions to verify individuals on the register.

It was further reported that the annual canvass would be retained, however there would be changes to the arrangements, the ERO would have to send an individual invitation to each resident in the household to register individually.

Reference was made to the key tasks to be undertaken between now and 1 December 2015:-

2012-13:	Designing, building and testing the new system;
2013-14:	Preparing for delivery and roll out of the new service;
July – Dec 2014:	Transition begins with confirmation of existing electors and write out
2015:	Completion of the transition with pre-election mini canvass activity, and post General Election household canvass; and
2016 onwards:	New system in place

Particular reference was given to the main events in IER which EROs or electoral administrators needed to be aware of, together with other provisions within the Act:-

- Parliamentary Constituencies Boundary Review;
- Changes to timetable for Parliamentary Elections;
- Timing of Parish Councils;
- Review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations;
- Inadequate Performance of Returning Officers;
- Voters Waiting at Polling Station at Close of Poll;
- Use of Emblems on Ballot Papers; and
- Notification of Rejected Postal Vote.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

28. ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION REPORT ON POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTION

Consideration was given to a report of the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) on the administration of the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections with the overall conclusion of the AEA being that 'voters were not at the heart of the process for the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in 2012' and the report noted that it was the low turnout which had made the headlines but that there were other issues which the election had raised. The detailed rules on the conduct of the election had been extremely late making planning for all involved difficult.

The report also concluded that 'it is not in the interests of voters of the effective administration of the electoral process to hold a major national poll in November and during the usual period for the annual canvass'.

The Executive Director (Governance) referred to the appendices attached to the AEA report and made particular reference to the recommendations with regard to the following areas:-

- Legislative Framework;
- Management and Performance;
- Moving the Canvass;
- Standing for election and the campaign;
- Public awareness and participation;
- Managing the poll; and
- Verification, counts and results collation.

AGREED:

That the content of the report be noted.

29. POSTAL VOTE REFRESH

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (Governance) updating Members on the refresh of absent vote personal identifiers that was currently being undertaken. It was a requirement that all absent vote signatures which were more than five years old were refreshed and this happened for the first time in 2012 when 13,347 absent voters were refreshed.

This year postal voters that first registered for a postal vote between March 2007 and February 2008 were subject to the requirement to refresh and a total of 5,155 electors had been asked to resubmit their signature for use in verification of postal votes. To date 3,336 (64.3%) had responded and a reminder had been sent to all properties on 21 February 2013. The deadline for receipt of refreshed signatures was 31 March 2013 and following the deadline it was intended to write to those who had not responded that they no longer had a postal vote, enclosing a postal vote form to complete should they wish to re-apply for a postal vote.

AGREED:

(i) That the report be noted;

(ii) That Members receive a list of persons no longer having a postal vote "on request".

30. THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION NEWS BULLETIN 'THE REGISTER' ISSUE 16

Members were provided with a copy of Issue no 16 of the Electoral Commission News Bulletin: 'The Register' (detailed at **Appendix A**) which set out current issues affecting the democratic framework for local government and included:-

- Our advice on the question for the independence referendum;
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013;
- Queues at close of poll;
- May 2013 – our public awareness campaign;
- Putting voters first in Northern Ireland;
- Unanimous call for electoral law to be modernised;
- Costs of the 2011 referendum; and
- Submitting your annual statement of accounts.

AGREED:

That the newsletter be noted.

31. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The Executive Director (Governance) reported that the Electoral Administration Act 2006 had introduced powers for the Electoral Commission to set and monitor performance standards for Electoral Registration and the results of the Electoral Commission assessment for 2012 which showed that Tameside Electoral Registration Officer continued to perform above all 10 standards.

It was reported that the ten performance standards were grouped into four areas as follows:-

- Completeness and Accuracy of Register;
- Integrity;
- Participation; and
- Planning and Organisation.

The outcome of the assessment for Tameside in the 10 performance standards were reported as 'above the required standard' in all of the 10 performance standards.

It was further reported that Tameside was the only Council in the 10 AGMA authorities to receive this outstanding performance and it was –

AGREED:

That the report be noted and a letter be sent to the staff concerned thanking them for their continued support and effort.