

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting15th March 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Electoral Administration Act and Security Measures and Elections 2007

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report that provided an update relating to the Electoral Administration Act and security measures, together with details of the support arrangements for the May 2007 elections. Specifically the report covered the following areas relating the Act:-

Changes to the timetable
Nominations and candidates
Performance standards

With regard to arrangements for the Elections in May 2007 Members noted work that had been undertaken in the following areas:-

Polling stations

A review of polling stations had been undertaken including consultation with members to identify suitable buildings in the borough . The exercise had not been as successful hoped and it had been necessary to hire mobile polling stations for certain locations.

This extensive review of polling venues and facilities was complete and details of the polling stations identified were provided to Members. Members noted one amendment to the list appended to the report, this related to Bishopsgarth and Elmtreee Ward where the Mobile Polling Station in the Lay by at the Five Alls Pub , Marske Lane would now be Mobile Polling Station at Bothell Drive behind Marske Parade Shops.

The work undertaken with regard to Polling Stations would contribute towards the full review of polling stations required by the Electoral Administration Act before December 2008.

New postal and proxy vote provisions

The first part of the exercise had been completed and over 18,000

renewals had been returned. The remaining 7,500 would be sent a reminder and any non-respondents after that sent a deletion notice which would include a fresh application form.

Any completed application form must bear the electors usual signature as it will be rejected if it does not match the signature provided on the security statement returned with the ballot paper.

Pre poll Information

Officers were considering using an A4 format that would incorporate the detail of the traditional polling card together with additional information to raise awareness of key dates e.g. last day for postal vote applications.

Electoral Suppliers

It was noted that the electoral Reform Society was the main printing and packing supplier and it would be printing all pre-poll, postal and ballot papers for this Election. The Royal Mail's walk sort service would be used to ensure cost effective delivery.

The count hall would accommodate the counting of 16 wards at a time. The order of the count had been determined taking into account information from the last elections regarding the number of votes cast, the closeness of result and the number of seats. The first 16 wards would be the first to be verified and counted and the rest would follow as a table became available. The parish counts would follow the borough counts in the same order. Details of the count order were provided.

Communication

Regular briefings with Group Leaders continued and information updates have been sent to all councillors, parish clerks and regional party offices. A parish clerks meeting was held on 13 February and a members seminar at Thornaby Pavilion was held on 6 March. A briefing of all appointed election agents was to be held prior to the election.

Police meeting

A liaison meeting had been arranged with the police nominated single point of contact to discuss the provision of policing response to a local election situation to enable free elections.

Following this meeting Officers would be liaising with Stockton Security and Surveillance service to discuss arrangements as necessary.

Publicity

Members noted the The Electoral Commission's campaign for elections in England and Wales which used the central theme of 'if you want to vote, make sure nothing stops you'. The campaign aims to communicate the need to register to 'have your say' by voting.

The Council would be running a series of local events to compliment this campaign. A second burst of advertising would run in the week immediately prior to Election Day, reminding people about the upcoming elections. Additionally appropriate articles had been published in KYIT and the Stockton News and work with partners across the Tees Valley would include using adverts on the rears of buses and a 9 week campaign at Showcase Cinema Teesside.

Recruitment

The recruitment drive had been successful in achieving the numbers of staff required and application forms had been sent to individuals during February asking for line managers approval. At the time of writing the majority of forms had been authorised and returned to the Democratic Services Unit.

Fees

Details of the fees agreed by the Returning officer for Stockton, in line with those agreed across the Tees Valley were provided.

The Director of Law and Democracy had previously been appointed by the Council as Returning Officer for Local Government Elections and as registration Officer under section 8 of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983. For insurance purposes these appointments should be reconfirmed before 3 May elections. It was therefore recommended that Council be asked to reconfirm the appointments.

RESOLVED that the progress regarding the Electoral Administration Act and support arrangements for the May 2007 elections be noted

RECOMMENDED to Council that the appointment of the Director of Law and Democracy as Returning Officer for Local Government Elections and as Registration Officer under Section 8 of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983 be reconfirmed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To update Members on progress regarding the Electoral Administration

Act and support arrangements for the May 2007 elections.

To reconfirm the Director of Law and Democracy as Returning Officer and Registration Officer.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable.

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not applicable.

Proper Officer
19 March 2007