

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....8th September 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of 2011 Elections and Emerging Issues

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to feedback from the elections held in 2011, along with emerging issues regarding legislation surrounding future elections.

The Elections in 2011 were unique in that a UK wide referendum was taking place at the same time as all other polls due on this date. Within this Borough, it was the first time that more than 2 combined elections were held on the same day as in previous years parish elections had been postponed. The report highlighted what went well, what could be done better and highlighted the complexity of providing for the Referendum in conjunction with the local and parish elections, and in particular the complexity of the procedures for postal vote opening and the count.

Following their conclusion, the Chief Counting Officer wrote to each counting officer on 18 May to thank them and their staff for all the effort and hard work they put into ensuring the elections and referendums were a success. Several messages of congratulations and thanks were also received from our local councillors, and colleagues who had supported the Elections.

Cabinet noted that in accordance with the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act the Boundary Commission for England would soon be publishing initial proposals for new constituencies in England for a period of 12 weeks consultation; the details of which would be deposited from the 13th September in the Municipal Buildings and main libraries within the Borough.

Progress was also noted regarding the passage of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill with the first elections of Police and Crime Commissioners due to take place in 2012. An amendment to the legislation proposed an election date of the 15th November , rather than the date of the scheduled local government elections in May .

The implications of the Localism Bill with regard to electoral services was also noted, with the Bill expected to receive Royal Assent in late October or November this year. The new legislation would give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases.

In order to meet its commitment to speed up the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration so that it was ready for implementation in 2014, the Government had also published draft legislation in June 2011. Once Parliament had reported on the draft proposals, the Government would formally respond to the Committee's report, making any necessary changes to the draft legislation with a view to laying a final Bill before Parliament in early 2012.

The Government wished to take steps to improve the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register and between June and December 2011, a number of local authorities would run pilots to test data matching schemes to see if the existing public authority databases could be used to improve the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register. The pilots would allow local authorities to compare their electoral register with other public databases to identify people missing from the register or entries on the register that are inaccurate or fraudulent. There were 22 pilot schemes which between them would use combinations of data from public authorities including the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Transport, the Department for Education, HM Revenue and Customs, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Ministry of Defence.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the report and specifically the impact that additional legislation will have over the following three years with regards to individual registration and Parliamentary Boundary changes, be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To keep members informed of implementation of the new Acts, the Electoral Commission's approach and to highlight the likely impact on electoral services.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councilor Cook declared a personal non prejudicial interest in the item entitled Review of 2011 Elections and Emerging Issues as he was employed within an MP's constituency office.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

Proper Officer  
12 September 2011