

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting10th September 2015

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of 2015 May Elections and an Update on 2015 Canvass;
Community Governance Reviews; the Police and Crime Commissioner
Elections and Parliamentary Review

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on the Review of 2015 May Elections and Update on 2015 Canvass, Community Governance Reviews, Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and Parliamentary Boundary Review.

The Parliamentary, District and Parish elections were held on 7 May 2015. The report highlighted what went well, what could be done better and the next steps needed to allow SBC to undertake a successful PCC election programme in 2016.

The combined nature of the election programme in 2015 would create inevitable pressures within key areas of the project. This was the first time since 1979 that the Parliamentary, Borough and Parish Elections had taken place at the same time resulting in 33 separate polls to administer; this was also the first time that an election was being delivered under the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) regime. As a result the workload for the elections increased significantly. By way of illustrating the scale of the task:-

- 339 nomination papers were checked (most of which required further follow up and multiple checks)
- 2,254 assenter details had to be checked against the electoral register
- 196 agents were appointed
- 100 polling stations were booked
- 505 staff were appointed to 1,372 jobs
- 70,002 postal ballot packs were issued and 64,162 were receipted and opened representing an unprecedented turnout of postal voters
- A staggering 2,592 postal votes were returned on polling day which all had to be opened and processed for verification as soon as possible after 10pm

The interest in the election also resulted in a surge of registration and postal vote applications which put additional pressures on the Electoral Team working to new IER processes and at a time when work on administering the elections was gathering pace. During the statutory elections period:-

- 16,127 registration applications were received
- 2,140 postal vote applications were received

The report highlighted the regional, sub regional and local feedback and any subsequent recommendations.

The 2015 canvass would be the first full canvass of all properties in the Borough since the move to Individual Electoral Registration. The canvass would differ from other previous canvasses under the old system because the form sent to properties, the "Household Enquiry Form (HEF)", was used purely to elicit information about who lives in the property and cannot be used to register them. Following receipt of a Household Enquiry Form, any new resident who had moved into a particular property would need to be sent an invitation to register individually and this could be completed on the Invitation to Register form provided, online, or over the telephone (provided that national insurance number and date of birth are provided).

The 2015 Canvass would also be last that was undertaken before the transition to individual electoral registration was complete. Any existing elector that had not registered individually by 1 December 2015 would be removed from the register. A large number of existing electors were transferred automatically to the IER register last summer following matching against central government records and those unconfirmed or "red" electors, who could not be confirmed automatically, had already received repeated communications from electoral services and personal visits. These "red" electors, along with any new elector, needed to provide national insurance number and date of birth to complete their registration.

Key dates in the 2015 Canvass were detailed within the report.

Invitations to register individually would be sent out to anyone added to the HEF form throughout all stages of the canvass.

A comprehensive engagement plan had been developed identifying a range of activities to raise awareness of the canvass across the Borough. This would include press releases, social media messages on Twitter and Facebook, Stockton News, KYIT, advertising on 180,000 SBC car park tickets, library book receipts and information sent out via partners in the

Democratic Information Network.

A valid petition had been received calling for a Community Governance Review to be undertaken with a view to the abolition of Billingham Town Council. The key dates were listed within the report.

In 2011 legislation was passed to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600, but the review of constituency boundaries that would have made the recommendations necessary to implement these changes was halted because of disagreements within the previous Government over constitutional reform.

Under the law, a new review by the Boundary Commission must be conducted after the 2015 General Election and completed by October 2018. It must again divide the UK into 600 constituencies.

Given the time required to complete boundary reviews, any changes to the Rules would have to be a priority for the new Government if the October 2018 deadline is to be met.

The election programme for next year would see Stockton lead on the PCC election for the Cleveland Force area. Preparation commenced on 4 August and would continue with regular updates to Lead Members throughout. In addition it was likely that there would be requested to undertake a Referendum on Europe. In addition, if greater devolution was given to the Sub Region, a Mayor may need to be elected.

The next steps were as follows:-

- Complete election accounts.
- Maintain momentum with suppliers especially Adare and Royal Mail.
- Continue planning for the 2016 PCC Elections with immediate effect, drafting the detailed management plans and scheduling Cleveland Force Planning Meetings.
- Consult with the necessary stakeholders re the PCC election Arrangements
- Implement 2015 and Canvass Plans
- Implement Community Governance reviews
- Undertake preparation for any Boundary Review.
- Implement recommendations as agreed.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the report be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure an efficient, effective, and robust election process.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

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

N/A

Proper Officer
14 September 2015