

## **Democracy and Standards Committee**

At 7.00 pm on Monday 25th September, 2023

Held as a Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby

### **Present:-**

#### Shadow Members

Councillor Andy Mercer (Chair)  
Councillor Jean Addison  
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury  
Councillor Robin Carter  
Councillor Melanie Coleman  
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz

Councillor Ian Jelley  
Councillor Kirk Harrison  
Councillor Matt Keane  
Councillor Paul Marks  
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell  
Councillor Michael Tye

#### Officers

Also in attendance – Councillor

The Chair welcomed members and the viewing public to the meeting.

### **66 Apologies for absence**

**Resolved** to note an apology for absence was received from Councillor G Lawman.

### **67 Members' Declarations of Interest**

The chair invited those members, who wished to do so, to make any declaration of interest.

**Resolved** to note that no declarations were made.

### **68 Minutes from the meeting held on 6 June 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023 were received.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of 6 June 2023 be approved and signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **69 Polling District and Polling Place Review 2023**

The joint report of the Executive Director of Customer & Governance, Mrs Wylie and Head of Electoral Services, Miss Jackson was received to seek approval to the plans for the commencement of a statutory review of polling districts and polling places.

Mrs Wylie, in her capacity as returning officer, presented the report to the committee and explained that a statutory review of polling districts and polling places had to be carried out once every five years. The proposal, as detailed in the timetable at 5.4 of the report, was to commence the review on Monday 2 October 2023 with conclusion by 30 November 2023, thus enabling relevant changes to be made to the electoral register in readiness for its publication on 1 December 2023.

The report also detailed alternative options, which if chosen, would result in the electoral register being published twice within a short period and would also result in resource implications, with the potential to cause confusion in the lead up to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections on 2 May 2024.

Details of the methods of consultation were provided in the report.

Members asked what the response rate to such consultation would normally be. Miss Jackson responded to say that responses were not high, and there were many ways in which responses could be made, including through social media, publications, discussion with local groups, particularly around disabled access, and other stakeholders. Whilst the review could be carried out by merely putting out a Notice, the council was keen to engage with the public and highlight the work undertaken by the Elections team.

Reference was also made to the electoral register and the work that was undertaken to ensure its accuracy. Miss Jackson explained that the annual canvass takes place in late Summer each year and that visiting officers attend at premises to seek information from those living there to ensure they are added to the register. There was also ongoing work with checking records and details to ensure that the register was as accurate as possible.

Questions regarding voter ID were also raised. It was explained that there were many different forms of ID that could be used, and work was ongoing with communities, including a nationwide advertising campaign and more local information being available. Poll cards would also remind electors to ensure that a photo ID was taken to the polling station. Those without photo ID could apply for a Voter Authority Certificate and this information would also be on the Poll Card.

The chair proposed that the recommendations as detailed at 3.1 to 3.5 of the report, be approved and this was seconded by Councillor Marks and on being put to the vote declared carried.

**Resolved that:**

- (i) the commencement of the compulsory polling district and places review on Monday 2 October 2023 be approved;
- (ii) the outline timetable detailed at 5.4 of the report be approved;
- (iii) the Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to take the necessary measures to give effect to parliamentary constituency changes, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new constituencies, until the boundaries are fully in force.
- (iv) the Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts on completion of the polling district review, ensuring the register reflects

existing and future parliamentary constituency boundaries, until the new boundaries are fully in force.

- (v) Delegated power be given to the Executive Director of Customer & Governance, to designate polling places in accordance with section 18 and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983, such power to be exercised only in circumstances where a decision is required at short notice and it is not possible to await a decision of the Democracy & Standards Committee.

## 70 Elections - Scale of Fees and Charges

The circulated joint report of the Executive Director of Customer & Governance, Mrs Wylie and Head of Electoral Services, Miss Jackson was received to note the changes to the scale of election fees for local government elections in North Northamptonshire.

Appended to the report were the original fees, along with the revised scale of fees and charges.

Mrs Wylie presented the report and clarified that the revised fees would ensure that staff were adequately remunerated to reflect additional responsibilities and that fees were in line with the National Living Wage and sufficiently attractive to encourage staff to undertake election duties. Consultation with West Northamptonshire had also been undertaken to ensure that we would not lose staff to a neighbouring district because they were potentially paying more.

Members asked if town and parish councils would contribute to the election fees, within their own area. Mrs Wylie confirmed that this had been the case across North Northamptonshire for some time and that town and parish councils in the Kettering area would be asked to do so in future.

It was proposed by Councillor Mercer that the revised fees and charges be noted, this was seconded by Councillor Marks and on being put to the vote declared carried.

**Resolved** that the revised scale of election fees and charges for local government elections within North Northamptonshire, as detailed at appendix 2, be noted.

## 71 Close of meeting

There being no further business the chair closed the meeting at 7.27pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified