

ELECTORAL REGISTRATION PROCESS REVIEW TASK & FINISH GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2016 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Ken Gregory (Chairman); Councillors Campbell, Connor, Falcon, Game and Martin

In Attendance: Councillors D Saunders and M Saunders

55. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Glenn Coleman-Cooke, substituted by Councillor Martin.

56. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

57. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Campbell proposed, Councillor Game seconded and Members agreed the minutes to be a correct record of the meeting that was held on 08 October 2015.

58. UPDATE ON ANY OUTSTANDING ISSUES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Claire Hawken, Electoral Services Manager advised Members that producing the map of the electoral area for Thanet was a large piece of work that would to be done on an actual paper map, as this was not available electronically. She said that this will be provided to Members at a much later date.

59. LATEST REGISTRATION FIGURES OVER THE LAST 6 MONTHS

Claire Hawken introduced the item. She advised Members that the electoral services team was going to check on those properties that were appearing as 'voids' on the register. Void properties denote that there were no electors registered in those properties or it could also mean that the properties were in reality also empty at the given time when the register was updated. The team would compare the register data with information from Benefits and Council Tax.

Claire Hawken informed the meeting that an updated register is published each month and that at the end of each annual canvass period, the updated full register is also published. Currently the voter registration level is 90.533% of the district population (based on 2014 figures). Any individual who would not have been registered under Individual Electoral Registration (IER) by 1 December would be deleted from the current edition of the register. Two thousand four hundred and ninety four people may have been removed from the register as a result of non-compliance on their part.

Councillor K. Gregory, Chairman of the sub-group said that 90% registration level was a positive story.

The report was noted.

60. RAISING AWARENESS/ TAKE UP OF REGISTRATION OPTIONS

Madeline Homer, CEx introduced the item. She said that the Mosaic Profile was in the report to illustrate the categories of individuals and how Council could communicate with them regarding voter registration. The description in the profile needs to be re-worded. In response to Member query regarding how TDC voter registration levels compared with neighbouring council, Clare Hawken said that Canterbury City Council had 95% registration and this took into account student population in Canterbury.

Members then requested that officers considered a larger sample size of comparators that would include other councils in Kent. Officers agreed to the request. Members also suggested that a strategy be put in place to encourage increased voter registration in the areas of extreme low registration uptake.

Claire Hawken said that the Electoral Services Team was using information about residents who have moved from Council Tax to send registration forms and encourage online registration. She indicated that cross referencing information with the Revenue and Benefits department was a manual process that was time consuming, more so with the limited staff resource the Council had. The team was working on targeting areas with low registration. Members requested that a cost to the Electoral Services budget be provided regarding the internal communications recharge. Officers agreed to provide the information at a later date.

The report was noted.

Post Meeting Update

The Medway Borough Council registration level figure is 89% of the borough population.

The registration deadline for the EU referendum is 7 June 2016.

61. POLLING DISTRICTS

Claire Hawken said that electoral services had carried out a review of the polling stations that were used for previous elections. A number of challenges or changes were identified which led to mitigating measures being put in place. When the next formal review does take place, the information that has been generated by this review will feed into that process.

Members noted the report.

62. END OF YEAR RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chairman said that Members appreciated the work done by the electoral services team and noted some of the main challenges faced by the department during last May's election, particularly the printing of some of the ballot papers. Members were hopeful that the current arrangement for future elections would deliver successful administration of the electoral process. They acknowledged that the adoption of IER had its own complex challenges. Madeline Homer reported that officers learnt some lessons and took positive steps from the challenges faced during the May 2015 local government and parliamentary elections.

Members reiterated that the sub group had a scrutiny role to play as there were Police and Crimes Commissioner elections and the national referendum on 5 May and 23 June 2016 respectively. They thanked the electoral services team for the work done in the last twelve months.

Meeting concluded: 7.35 pm