

Attendance

Members of the Governance Committee

Cllr Alan Bolshaw (Chair)
Cllr Ian Brookfield
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Paula Brookfield

Employees

Fabrica Hastings	Democratic Services Assistant (Observing)
Jas Kaur	Democratic Services Manager (Host)
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Kirsty Tuffin	Democratic Service Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Milkinder Jaspal.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest made.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.
- 4 Matters arising**
There were no matters arising.
- 5 Evaluation of 2020 Annual Canvass**
David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on the 2020 annual canvass that provided an evaluation of the annual canvass, carried out by the Electoral Registration Officer.

The Committee were advised that the 2020 annual canvass had been the first to be delivered under the new Canvass Reform - The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. The key change highlighted was the introduction of a national data matching step to help match the data on the electoral register with the Department for Work and Pensions records. The three different routes that would follow the data matching step were as follows:

- Route 1 - properties that were unlikely to have changed and these households only need to respond if they wanted to make a change.
- Route 2 – properties were likely to have changed and they were required to respond to the canvass communication they had received.
- Route 3 - properties in Wolverhampton are Care Homes where a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) would be required to provide an update on their current occupants.

The Committee were advised that due to covid-19 the traditional door-to-door canvassing had been replaced with data matching and telephone calls to prompt a response. Despite the challenge of covid-19 the overall response rate from the canvass work completed had been 89% and the revised electoral register was published on 4 January 2021 with an electorate of 183,479.

Following questions, the Committee were advised that enforcing current legislation in regard to registering for elections, would not increase uptake and a change in Government legislation would be required for the use of auto-enrolment to vote. It was agreed that David Pattison would bring an update on this to a future Governance Committee meeting. To ensure all residents felt comfortable voting in the current climate, a letter would be circulated to all residents to provide the option of a postal vote for the May 2021 elections.

Resolved:

1. That the evaluation of the 2020 Annual Canvass be noted.
2. That it be agreed that David Pattison, Director of Governance, would provide an update on current legislation on residents registering for elections, its enforcement and auto-enrolment into elections to a future Governance Committee meeting.

6 **Update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters**
David Pattison, Director of Governance, presented the report on Governance Matters that provided an update on the work programme and other matters within the scope of the Governance Committee's remit, approved by Committee in January 2021.

The Committee were advised that since the publication of the report, as per the supplementary pack, the Government had published their plans for the elections on 6 May 2021 to take place. The Council would be writing to all electors in the City to provide confidence in the election and outline the safety measures that would be put in place. An update on the 2021 elections would be considered at the next Governance Committee meeting.

The Committee were advised that in previous committee meetings, on 26 February 2020 and 19 March 2020, proposals were considered to amend the constitution to modernise the political structure in the Council, particularly around Scrutiny and the introduction of public Cabinet Advisory Boards with cross party representatives. The

work on these changes were paused due to the covid-19 pandemic. David Pattison, as Monitoring Officer for the Council, recommended that any changes to the political structure be paused until May 2022, with a pilot of the changes to take place the end of 2021/beginning of 2022. It was agreed that details on the pilot would be considered at future Governance Committee meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the update from the Monitoring Officer on Governance Matters be noted.
2. That it be agreed that changes to the political structure be paused until May 2022, with a pilot of the changes to take place the end of 2021/beginning of 2022.
3. That it be agreed that details of the modernising of the political structure pilot be considered at future Governance Committee meetings.

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Any other business

There was no other business discussed.