

Meeting of the City Council

1 February 2017

Report title	Appointment of Local Returning Officer for the West Midlands Mayoral Election	
Referring body	n/a	
Councillor to present report	Councillor Roger Lawrence	
Wards affected	All	
Cabinet Member with lead responsibility	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
Accountable director	Keith Ireland, Managing Director	
Originating service	Democratic Services	
Accountable employee(s)	Martyn Sargeant Tel Email	Head of Democratic Services 01902 555045 martyn.sargeant@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	n/a	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Council is recommended to:

1. Appoint the Managing Director as the Local Returning Officer for the City of Wolverhampton for the West Midlands Combined Authority election on the 4 May 2017.
2. Delegate responsibility to make any operational changes to polling stations to the Local Returning Officer, following consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Resources and Leader of the Opposition.

Recommendations for noting:

The Council is asked to note:

1. That polling stations for the Mayoral election will be unchanged from those used at the 2016 PCC/city election and EU Referendum with the exception that the St Peter's station situated at the university will be reinstated at the Register Office (Civic Centre).
2. That the West Midlands Combined Authority has agreed that no Local Returning Officer should pay any election employee less than the voluntary living wage.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report proposes the appointment of a Local Returning Officer for the City of Wolverhampton for the West Midlands Combined Authority election on 4 May. It also outlines the arrangements for polling stations for that election.

2.0 Appointment of Local Returning Officer

- 2.1 Following the implementation of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in 2016, there will be an election for a West Midlands Mayor in May 2017. The arrangements for the election are covered by the draft Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017.
- 2.2 At its board meeting on the 20 January, the WMCA agreed to appoint the Birmingham Returning Officer as the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO). He will have responsibility for the co-ordination of the Mayoral election across the seven metropolitan areas in the West Midlands.
- 2.3 Each of the seven metropolitan councils must appoint its own Local Returning Officer, who is responsible for the delivery of the election in his or her area. As has been the practice for elections in Wolverhampton in recent years, this paper recommends the appointment of the Council's Managing Director as the Wolverhampton Local Returning Officer.

3.0 Polling stations

- 3.1 Prior to the general election in 2015, the Council undertook a statutory review of polling places and stations. That review was refreshed after the election and the Council approved 130 polling stations across the city for use at the elections in 2016.
- 3.2 There is no requirement for a further review at this time and feedback from voters and election staff in 2016 suggests that the arrangements worked well, coping with the high turnout at the EU Referendum in June.
- 3.3 The Council has worked with the university to encourage student registration and participation. In 2016, this included using two university premises as polling stations, both in the St Peter's ward. Whilst one of these arrangements worked well, the second station – located in the university's Ambika Paul building – had no impact on voter turnout, despite being significantly more convenient. It is therefore proposed to reinstate the previous station, which was housed in the Register Office at the Civic Centre. The Council will continue to work with the university to encourage student involvement.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The WMCA has allocated a budget of £4 million to cover the costs of the Mayoral election. The allocations for each authority are based on the amount allocated for the 2016 PCC election.

4.2 The WMCA has agreed that no Local Returning Officer should pay any election employee an hourly rate of less than the voluntary living wage, currently standing at £8.45. This will increase the cost of the process, but based on experience of previous elections it is anticipated that this can be contained within the budgetary allocation.
[GE/26012017/I]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Whilst the Local Returning Officer is appointed by the Council, he is individually legally responsible for the delivery of the election.

5.2 The draft Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017, once approved by Parliament, will provide the supplementary governing legislation for the conduct of the Mayoral election.
[TS/25012017/M]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 This report does not contain any changes to policy or procedures and there are therefore no equalities implications arising from it. The reviews of polling stations undertaken in 2014 and 2015 were both the subject of equality analyses, with mitigating actions identified as appropriate.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications arising from the report.

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from the report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations, report to Council, 4 November 2015

Appointment of Combined Authority Returning Officer, report to the West Midlands Combined Authority, 20 January 2017