

Electoral Matters – 18 January 2023

In attendance:

Elliot Hogan

Tom Stannard

Iolanda Puzio

Jacque Russell

Alison Watt

CLlr Dickman (acting Chair), Cllr Nkurunziza, Cllr Shama , Cllr August, Cllr Reynolds, Cllr Dawson, Cllr King, Cllr Walters , Cllr Saeed

1) Apologies for Absence:

Cllr Lancaster

Cllr Bailey

Cllr Merry

Cllr Youd

Cllr Mullen

Cllr Hinds

Cllr Kealey

Cllr Robinson-Smith

Cllr Cammell

Cllr Warmisham

Cllr Morris

Cllr Cusack

Cllr Brabiner

Cllr Kelly

Cllr Bentham

Cllr Saunders

2) Declarations of interest

Nothing to declare

3) Minutes of previous meeting (16 November 2022)

Approved

4) Matters Arising

None

5) Polling Stations Update

Document shared by Elliot

There are only seven polling stations where issues/concerns have arisen:

Boundary Road Methodist Church – we are looking at Irlam Library as an alternative. It is near the shops – visiting tomorrow, will likely go ahead.

The Binoch Centre – lack of disabled access has been flagged. We are going to measure the stairway for ramp. If that is not possible, we will have to address it. It is a highly residential area, so there aren't many options

Highgate Lane temporary cabin (Little Hulton) – a fence has been erected. We have been to visit, finding that there is still a walkway. This has been used for number of years, so for this election we will keep it in the same place, familiarity preferable.

Streetgate Community Centre – in the bottom corner of the polling district. There is no other option (including place for a temporary cabin), so we will be using this as usual.

Bethany Family Worship – there is a more central church which we will be visiting

Dukesgate Primary School – not appropriate, we will enquire at Amblecote Gardens (public area) but there is also a pub that could be a possibility.

Working Class Library - Canon Hussey Court still has work going on; we expect an update on that.

We are going to book all of the others, and will update on those listed above.

Cllr Dickman: There was an issue with accessibility at the Swinton Park temporary cabin last year.

Elliot: Yes it was a mistake in how it was placed. It was a one-off, and we expect it to be fine this time.

Cllr Reynolds: Concerns about Swinton and Wardley. Although there was communication, people were not going where the signage was placed, they were accessing from the front.

Elliot: This time we are using Unity, so will be able to signpost clearly.

Cllr Dawson: Now at Unity, those at the Gateway could walk past it; it could cause confusion. We need to make it clear with signage.

Elliot: We will make a plan for that.

Cllr King: Can we put a reminder on poll cards: don't forget your ID, including a list of approved ID? It shouldn't cost too much.

Elliot: Poll cards are on the agenda so we will discuss that. They will have a reminder, including approved ID and a link to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate.

Cllr Dickman: Information in Life in Salford (March edition): Can we ensure it goes out timely? The November issues has only just been delivered, so we need to make sure people receive it in time.

Elliot: There are tight timescales. March is the only one we can get in, but I will check in relation to delivery times.

Cllr Dickman: Can we assess the effectiveness of comms, perhaps in a month's time?

Elliot: We have asked the Comms Team to measure this.

Jacquie: We will be monitoring. That is why we are using our own webpages; we will be able to report back.

6) Voter ID Update

- Electoral Commission campaign

- GM & Local Comms

Elliot: A lot more is going on behind the scenes to get the message out, giving people more time to apply.

Cllr Saeed: For clarification, what ID can be used? Student ID?

Elliot: There is an accepted list on our webpage. If they don't have accepted ID, people can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. I will pass on the links.

Cllr Dawson: The mention of a message on the Council Tax bill envelopes, does it literally mean that? On the envelope? Or on a paper inside?

Elliot: Currently the Comms Team is looking at putting a message on the envelope. Something bundled inside would have been very expensive.

Jacquie: There are operational implications of an additional insert: cost and it would delay the Council Tax bill roll out. We don't want to interrupt that. We are looking at general information on all comms, in addition to the poll card, which will have relevant information on it.

- Poll Cards

Elliot: Although these will be different than usual, they will be in a similar format and will still be recognisable. GM has decided not to use paper with envelopes, but to stick with a poll card similar to previous. They will be larger than poll cards were previously (example shared).

There is a set format, but we can add some information, includes accepted ID. There is a lot of text but the alternative of enveloped paper was less desirable.

- Voter Authority Certificate applications

Elliot: 14 applications have come through; one was an MP to test. They are quicker to process than we expected. There are two people we are contacting for new photos, but the process is easier than expected, which is good from our end and good for voters.

- Staff Recruitment

Elliot: Staff recruitment emails are going out this week. Councillors mentioned both bank holidays over the election period, and we have taken that into account by recruiting earlier than usual.

- Equality Impact Assessment

In pdf (circulated)

Elliot: In coming weeks please help us with the one council approach: retweet, talk to people, direct to our website, our email address etc.

Working collaboratively, we are on top of things. So far everything is running smoothly.

Cllr August: 1) Can councillors help with the Voter ID application form? Can we help to fill in paper request for that? 2) Also on the Voter Authorisation Certificate, what is shown?

Elliot: 1) I am not sure, but I will find out. I imagine councillors would be able to help as a photo of the voter is required.

2) Again, I am not sure, but I will find out.

Cllr King: For people who don't have approved ID, and who need to apply, where is that being publicised?

Elliot: On our website, through comms, Gateways have paper forms and the ability to take photos.

Jacquie: The universal Contact Centre has information, have been trained re Voter ID, so they can point residents to the Gateways or to apply online. Reception staff have been trained, applications can be done face-to-face as well as digitally. We are trying to provide as many avenues as possible. Face-to-face support is over and above what the Electoral Commission asks for.

Elliot: We can also post out forms to people. This is an additional step, but we are making as easy as possible.

Cllr King: How are the additional costs covered?

Jacquie: There are two years of additional funding from DLUHC, up front for additional activities, but can also apply for additional funding above that. We are monitoring this with help of Finance.

Cllr Dickman: Are we able to do any leafleting, something to every household just about voter ID?

Elliot: We are not able to send a letter to every household. That is not in the scope of funding; DLUHC haven't covered that.

Jacquie: We are putting together an information pack for partners, university and housing. Internal Comms is helping us share information.

Cllr Dawson: Are we using a big banner for people passing the Civic Centre? Notices on buses?

Jacquie: Part of the GM plan is to have signage on buses and trams. GMCA is doing that for all ten of us, costing posters, leaflets and banners for other venues.

Cllr Dickman: How many additional staff will be needed compared to last year? Any further on with security?

Elliot: Staffing – there will be an additional poll clerk in each polling station (1 Presiding Officer, 2 Poll Clerks), akin to 2021. They will be named as a Poll Clerk, and trained accordingly to help with Voter ID.

Jacquie: We are also looking at additional Station Inspectors (SI), one per ward (20 instead of 10). There will be additional training for Presiding Officers and Station Inspectors on difficult conversations/conflict resolution, to ensure staff have the necessary skills. We are also asking SIs to be in their district all day so they can respond promptly if needed.

Elliot: With regards to security, we are working closely with Jeanette Staley. We are having preliminary talks, focusing on areas where previous problems have occurred, increasing security where we can.

Cllr Dickman: Will the increase in costs be covered?

Elliot: The increase in Poll Clerks will be covered by DLUHC, but not security.

Cllr Saunders: What do parties need to know in terms of organising campaigns, how the changes will impact on us?

Elliot: We do ask that you help raise awareness of Voter ID, including the links etc. But there is nothing that should negatively impact on your campaign, nothing to affect that. If you can reaffirm the Voter ID messages when you are out and about, it would be helpful.

Cllr Saunders: Are there any changes to postal votes?

Elliot: That will be happening later; legislation has not gone through yet. We know that councillors will not be allowed to collect/hold voters' postal votes, but that won't be in place for this year's election.

Cllr Dickman: Does that mean we won't be able to handle postal vote application forms?

Elliot: We don't know yet.

7) Any Other Business

Cllr Dickman: The changes on nomination forms, needing two signatures rather than 10 – is that still in place?

Elliot: Yes, that's correct. Nomination papers will hopefully be ready from 23 March.

Cllr Saunders: What will be the date for submission (taking into account the bank holidays)?

Elliot: 4 April

Cllr Saunders: Is there an update from the Boundary Commission?

Elliot: There has been nothing yet. The final consultation has ended, and we will update you when the final report is published.

Also, if a General Election were to be held before October, Voter ID would not be needed. Local Elections require it, but a General Election wouldn't.

Cllr Saunders: How will the coronation impact polling day?

Jacquie: It won't impact on the count. Obviously, we are aware of the impact on recruitment, so we have started that early.

Cllr Saunders: Are we being asked to second staff to GM?

Jacquie: Not yet. We may be asked to do so after our recruitment drive.

8) Date and Time of next meeting

It was agreed that no meeting will take place in February.

Date of next meeting: **Wednesday, 15 March 2023**

Meeting Adjourned