

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERS SERVICES SCRUTINY
STANDING PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 21 JUNE 2007
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 8.25 PM**

Members Present: R Church (Chairman), R Morgan (Vice-Chairman), J Markham, T Richardson, B Rolfe, D Stallan and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other members present: J M Whitehouse

Apologies for Absence: Mrs P Brooks and Mrs M McEwen

Officers Present I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), G Lunnun (Democratic Services Manager) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

Noted that Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse was attending the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Mrs P Brooks.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made pursuant to the Member Code of Conduct.

3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING - ATTACHED

Noted

4. 2007/08 WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

(Item 2) Review of Protocol on Outside Organisation

Review of second year of scheme to be considered at next meeting on 30 July 2007.

(Item 3) Cabinet operations in emergency situations

It was stressed that the Panel look at the practices in place at other Councils for this

(4) Review of Polling Stations with particular reference to disabled people

Stressed that that this consider the needs of both the visually impaired and the physically disabled. Size of signs should be reviewed as part of this. Consultation be carried out though the Members Bulletin

(5) Local Government White Paper

Noted that, at its next meeting on 16 July 2007, the Cabinet would be asked to consider options for exploring the paper. **Agreed** that the Cabinet be asked to refer all of the elements to the Panel for consideration including those on Executive matters.

Should this be agreed, it was agreed that additional meetings of the Panel be arranged to deal with the workload for Autumn 2007 onwards. **Agreed** that these be arranged as provisional dates in view of the uncertainty around the timetable for the implementation of the changes. At this stage the government was indicating that the changes would become law in Autumn 2007 with an introductory period of 18 months.

As part of this, the Panel might wish to interview Cabinet members. **Agreed** that the Chairman of the Panel recommend this to the Cabinet on 16 July 2007.

5. REVIEW OF MAY 2007 ELECTIONS

The Panel were invited to review the May 2007 Elections and submit feedback to the Returning Officer. The Panel received a report covering the key issues and made the following comments:

- the display screen for the Count was very useful, the display was very informative but not visible from parts of the hall. Consideration should be given to placing it in the centre of the hall where it would be more visible;
- Returning Officer to establish whether there was capacity at the Theydon Bois Village Hall for the new IT systems, displays and proposed 'bus stop' signs for identifying wards;
- in relation to the suitability of the hall for the count, some felt that the facilities/parking at the venue were ideal. Conversely a member felt that Waltham Abbey Town Hall would provide a better alternative venue as it would enable the count to be held in one hall;
- consideration should be given to having a Thursday Count for local elections. Some opposed a Friday County due to work commitments. There was strong lobbies for this option but also some support for a Friday Count. Views were mixed. There was a real need to carefully balance these arguments for local elections;
- the Returning Officer favoured a Friday count in view of the desire by the staff to be fresh for the count and for health and safety reasons;
- during combined elections, the feasibility of separating the various polls and holding them on different days should be considered;
- steps be taken to ensure the verification process was consistent. Xpress software be contacted with a view to securing this;
- Postal vote opening – all agents received advanced notification of the dates of this. Those submitted on the day of the election were dealt with straight after the close of poll;

- the results were put on the website but not broadcast live. Consideration could be given to using the Webcasting system for broadcasting the count. A report would be submitted to Cabinet on future uses of the system to cover this;
- a system was necessary for estimating the order of the results for the various wards. A provisional timetable could be made available for this and put on the website;
- the ballot papers should be laid out in a line when being counted to show how the results were 'panning out';
- the Postal Vote form on the website was out of date and was only corrected at the last minute, this had since been addressed to avoid similar future occurrences.
- there were issues in the Marden Ash Ward regarding non receipt of poll cards;
- the total number of postal votes issued was 3925 with approximately 70% returned;

ACTION:

Report with view of the Panel to be submitted to next OSC on 10 July 2007.

6. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report on Review of May 2007 Elections
Request for to Cabinet for work on White Paper.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 30 July 2006 at 7.30 p.m in CR1.