

## INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	22 JUNE 2020	12
<b>PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2019 - FEEDBACK</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

An unscheduled Parliamentary Election was held on Thursday 12 December 2019. This was the third Election to be held in 2019.

Tracy Manning, Acting Returning Officer has collated the post-election review feedback from candidates, agents and staff. The report below gives an outline of feedback received.

### SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Tracy Manning – Acting Returning Officer

### WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

To provide an outline of feedback received.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Tracy Manning, 01253 658521, [tracy.manning@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.manning@fylde.gov.uk)

### Parliamentary Election Feedback

1. Members will appreciate that the work associated with managing elections must comply with statutory requirements for which we are accountable to the Electoral Commission. The role of the Returning Officer must be impartial and the role is to ensure that the conduct of the elections is in accordance with the law. The Acting Returning Officer's responsibility is one of a personal nature distinct from the duties of an employee of the Council as a reflection of this.
2. However, where the Acting Returning Officer is able to make adjustments and improvements, he/she does so year-on-year. With this in mind, feedback was invited from candidates, agents and staff on the effectiveness of the arrangements for the 2019 parliamentary election and any suggested improvements were invited.
3. A post-election review meeting was held with the core election staff following which the feedback was overall positive. The announcement of the unscheduled Election put additional pressure on the team with different challenges relating to a December / winter poll in particular the dark nights and unknown weather conditions to plan for. But staff rose to the challenge and the elections were administered without event.

4. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to all candidates and agents. The questionnaire gave opportunity to feedback on all processes including nominations, postal voting, polling Stations and the count.
5. We received feedback from 4 out of the 5 candidates / agents standing. A summary of feedback is set out in the below.

#### **General feedback from Candidates and Agents:**

- 100% of Candidates / Agents were able to access documents they required and found it easy to contact the Elections office in a timely manner. Staff were found very helpful.
- *Local Council's Website, could be easier to navigate and information on relevant current information*

Action: review website.

- *Nominations: Some lack of clarity concerning the "known as" name and having to put the whole name in if no "known as" being used, as to whether the whole name, or just the first name.*

Action: This is covered in the Electoral Commission Guidance and will be emphasised in information provided going forward.

- 100% of Candidates / Agents were satisfied with the way nominations were handled.
- Candidates were generally satisfied with the postal voting process
- Assurance was sought regarding the robustness of the process for receiving votes from residents in rest homes

Action: Emphasise that candidates and their agents are able to attend the opening sessions of postal votes for transparency

#### **Count:**

- Most Candidates / Agents were satisfied with the count venue and layout.
- *There were some wards where the different boxes were in very different parts of the room and so it was difficult to "catch" when the boxes of most interest were being*
- *Must congratulate the returning officer and her team on the speed and efficiency in which the count took place. From delivery of the ballot boxes through to declaration of the result.*

#### **Other Comments**

- *Most professional and best organised General Election I have experienced.*

#### **Feedback from Core Staff:**

- Ensure core Elections team are fully staffed in the event of a snap election to process the high numbers of applications to register, duplicates, postal, proxy and overseas applications within a very short timeframe.
- Ensure staff reserves are appointed as the December election gave a higher number of staff dropouts on the lead up to polling day.
- The timing of the Election clashed with the annual publication of the register which software providers (i.e. Electoral Management Software) were not ready for. This resulted in added pressure to the team at the final hour.
- Issues with some schools around the timing of the Election and it being nativity time.
- Overseas electors received packs in a timely manner, but is an issue nationally given the short timeframes. The team will continue to offer the proxy voting process.
- Continue to work with cross boundary authorities (Preston and Wyre) ensuring plans are in place for new proposed Parliamentary boundary changes.
- Feedback from the Count was very positive and we were first in Lancashire to declare the result.
  - Continue to use larger layout allowing for an additional count team

- Ensure we have plenty of staff, ballot box runners, car parking attendants
  - Continue to look at different methods of counting.
6. To conclude, the Parliamentary election was an overall success. The feedback and suggested areas for improvements have been welcomed and improvements will be made for the next elections to be held in 2020.