

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Wednesday, 5th November 2014 at 4.00 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor M Norris – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors:

H Boggis
P Griffiths
C Willis

S Carter
(Mrs) J S Ward
R Yeo

J David
D W Weeks

Officers:

Mr P J Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Mr M Green – Head of Business Support and Elections
Ms Ann Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors (Mrs) J Cass, (Mrs) M E Davies, S Lloyd, S Rees-Owen, G Stacey, (Mrs) M Tegg, P Wasley and E Webster.

24. WELCOME

The new Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the new vice chair, County Borough Councillor (Mrs) J S Ward and wished to place on record the thanks of the Committee to the former Chairman, County Borough Councillor G Stacey for his good work in chairing the Committee over a number of years.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of personal interest in relation to the agenda.

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held on 7th October 2014 be approved as a correct record.

It was noted that Councillor Carter asked a question in relation to 21st Century Schools.

27. ANNOUNCEMENT - SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services informed Members that at the meeting of the Cabinet held on 30th October, 2014, Cabinet Members had considered the report of the Director of Regeneration and Planning in relation to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) . Following consideration of the report the decision taken by Cabinet included a request that scrutiny should consider certain elements of its introduction, namely, the Regulation 123 list and engagement with Town/Community Councils. He explained that it would be necessary to hold a special meeting of the Committee to consider this issue prior to the document being presented to Council and that as a result of consultation with the Chairman, the Committee would meet on Tuesday, 18th November 2014.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

28. TRANSITION TO INDIVIDUAL ELECTOR REGISTRATION

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services reported on the progress made in relation to the transition to Individual Elector Registration (IER). It was explained that whilst under the old system the 'head of the household' could register everyone eligible at their address IER requires everyone to be responsible for registering themselves and those wishing to register must provide their National Insurance Number and date of birth. The Director explained that the transition to IER in England and Wales had began in June 2014 with a data matching exercise to compare existing electors details with the details held on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) database. Local data matching was also undertaken to supplement the matching against the DWP database. Whilst it was pleasing that the Council had achieved a 95% match rate in relation to the 'confirmation live run' (CLR), undertaken in June, he pointed out that this was only a snapshot of a moment in time and that given the size of Rhondda Cynon Taf's electorate, there was still a significant amount of work to be done.

The Head of Business Support and Elections provided the Committee with an overview of the work being undertaken to raise the public's awareness of the changes. He explained that those details which had been confirmed through the CLR had been automatically transferred over to the new register whilst for those that did not match forms had been sent out inviting them to register and this would involve the new requirement to provide details of national insurance and date of birth for verification. He explained that of the 5% unconfirmed or whose circumstance had changed, those most at risk of losing their proxy and/or postal votes for elections held in 2015 unless they are verified with the additional data of DOB & NI number. However, no-one will be removed from the register until December 2015 at the earliest. He reported that a 'door knocking' exercise had been undertaken at the end of October to enable as many as possible to be included on the register when it is published on 1st December 2014. He advised Members that there would still be monthly updates through 'continuing registration so people would still be able to register after that date.

The Head of Business Support and Elections reported on the potential teething problems in transferring to the new system which once fully operational would be much more secure. He explained that the new Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) which are similar to the old canvass forms do not have a 'date of birth' field and it is likely that in some cases people are including details of their children. He also explained that an additional problem because some people whose data has already been transferred across will have seen the adverts for on-line registration and registered again. If they register on-line using a slightly different form of their name, the on-line system may not recognise that they are already registered and therefore it is likely that there will be some duplication. He added that this problem would eventually disappear once everyone's national insurance numbers are recorded as the system would recognise that the records related to the same person.

The Head of Business Support and Elections explained that these issues had been fed back to the Cabinet Office in Westminster and it was hoped that funding would be granted to undertake a mini canvas to help ensure the accuracy of the register.

Members discussed the information provided and asked how in their role as local members they could assist during this transition period. The Head of Business Support and Elections thanked Members and explained that they could assist by raising awareness of the changes within their local communities and as in previous years their local knowledge in identifying any anomalies contained within the published register would be welcomed. Responding to a query, the Head of Business Support and Elections explained that no-one would be removed from the register before the Parliamentary elections and also pointed out that there was still potential for the transition end date to be pushed back to December 2016 rather than December 2015 and therefore those who have failed to re-register will be removed from the register just prior to the local authority elections in Wales in May 2017.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Business Support and Elections for his update following which the Director of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members of the continuing issues with regard to electoral boundaries in Pontyclun, Llanharan and Llanharry as a result of the Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review being deferred to the next parliament and commented on the possible confusion for electors as a result of different elections operating on different boundaries.

In conclusion the Committee thanked the electoral administration officers for their work in implementing the new system.

M Norris
Chairman

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm.

