

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICERS

Council - 21 February 2023

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder: None

Also Considered by: Governance Committee - 2 February 2023

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Recommendation to Governance Committee:

It is recommended to Council that the Chief Officer Customer & Resources, the Electoral Services Manager and the Deputy Electoral Services Manager are appointed as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for Sevenoaks District Council.

Recommendation to Council:

The Chief Officer Customer & Resources, the Electoral Services Manager and the Deputy Electoral Services Manager are appointed as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for Sevenoaks District Council.

Reason for recommendation: Legislation allows District Councils to appoint officers of the Council as a deputy to the Electoral Registration Officer to act in the absence of the Electoral Registration Officer. With new responsibilities enacted in relation to Voter ID, it is considered appropriate to appoint additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers to ensure voters are able to obtain a temporary voter authority certificate from the District Council.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Under section 8(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 the District Council must appoint an Officer to the position of 'Electoral Registration Officer'. This position is responsible for maintaining the Electoral Register for the area. The Chief Executive is appointed as the Electoral Registration Officer for Sevenoaks District Council.
- 2 Under section 52(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 the Council may appoint a Deputy Electoral Registration Officer who is able to perform and exercise any of the duties and powers of the Electoral Registration Officer. The role is currently assigned to the post of Assistant Chief Executive.

The Voter Identification Regulations 2022

- 3 Regulations 18 and 19 of the Voter Identification Regulations 2022 set out the circumstances in which a temporary voter certificate must be issued, that they must be issued by the District Council and that amongst other details a temporary voter authority certificate must contain the registration officers' signature.
- 4 Accompanying guidance issued by the Electoral Commission sets out further that the Electoral Registration Officer's (ERO) signature can be provided by a deputy and should be a wet ink signature. It is also recommended that the ERO should consider appointing additional Deputy ERO's. This is to ensure that there is sufficient available resource to sign a temporary Voter Authority Certificate at potentially very short notice, up to 5pm on a polling day.

Appointment of additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers

- 5 To support the Electoral Registration Officer in ensuring new duties introduced by the Voter Identification Regulations, alongside all other duties permitted to be undertaken by a Deputy ERO can be fulfilled, it is recommended that the Chief Officer Customer & Resources, the Electoral Services Manager and the Deputy Electoral Services Manager are appointed as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for Sevenoaks District Council.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 7 None.

Key Implications

Financial

- 8 There are no financial implications arising from the recommended appointments.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 9 The appointment of additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers provides resilience and mitigates risks in the event that the Electoral Registration Officer is unavailable to fulfil his duties.

Equality Impacts

- 10 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

- 11 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Conclusions

- 12 It is recommended that Council appoints additional Deputy Electoral Registration Officers to reduce the risks of not being able to administer electoral registration duties, including those associated with the introduction of Voter ID, as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers will have the same powers.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

Representation of the People Act 1983, Sections 8 & 52 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/2>

Voter Identification Regulation 2022, Sections 18 & 19 -
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/1382/contents/made>

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive