
Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 19 March 2021

Subject: Mayoral Election preparations

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update members on preparations for the first West Yorkshire Mayoral Election, due to be held 6 May 2021.

2. Information

Covid-19 Mitigations

- 2.1 Members have previously received updates on preparation for the local and Mayoral elections due to be held in May 2021. Government has confirmed that their intention remains to hold elections as planned, with appropriate mitigations in place to ensure a Covid secure environment for voters, candidates and supporting officials. Additional funding will be made available for this purpose.
- 2.2 In late February Cabinet Office published their [‘approach to elections and referendums during Covid-19’](#) which outlines how political parties, candidates, agents and campaigners can undertake Covid-19 secure campaigning activity for the May 2021 polls. This document sets out the ways in which Government will change the lockdown regulations to support door to door campaigning activity from 8 March, including:
- Only those who are campaigning for a specific electoral outcome can carry out this activity
 - Those in charge of campaigns will have to ensure that campaigners are aware of the guidance and of their responsibilities to follow the lockdown rules
 - Campaigners will be allowed to deliver leaflets and canvass electors

- The number of campaigners operating together should be kept to an absolute minimum and a 2-metre distance should be maintained between them at all times
- Campaigners should not enter a private home
- Campaigners may speak to electors on their doorsteps, maintaining at least 2 metres distance at all times
- Campaigners should only enter premises, such as a shared hallway in a block of flats, where absolutely necessary to reach individual homes served by communal areas
- Unless it is unsafe to do so, canvassing from within shared internal areas should be carried out by a single campaigner
- At all times campaigners should ensure that all necessary mitigations are applied including the wearing of face coverings, keeping socially distanced at 2 metres, and sanitising hands between visiting different households.

2.3 The document also provides information on the following:

- Lifts to polling stations
- Collection of postal votes from electors
- Telling
- Use of committee rooms

Candidate Engagement

2.4 Combined Authority officers are working closely with colleagues at Leeds City Council to prepare for and execute the Mayoral Election scheduled for 6 May 2021. It has been agreed that Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council, takes on the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) role given the wealth of experience of running elections within the region. Ben Still, Managing Director of the Combined Authority, will act as a Deputy CARO.

2.5 A series of briefing sessions are being convened for confirmed candidates, led in turn by Leeds City Council and the Combined Authority. As the responsible body for the delivery of elections, Leeds City Council briefings are intended to support candidates with all aspects of campaigning, registration, and the electoral process. The Combined Authority sessions provide information on the nature and the role of the Mayoral Combined Authority, the functions the Mayor will receive, and details on the devolution deal as agreed with Government.

2.6 A number of candidates have declared ahead of the close of nominations on 8 April, and these are as follows:

- Tracy Brabin MP – Labour Party
- Bob Buxton – Yorkshire Party
- Cllr Andrew Cooper - Green Party
- Cllr Stewart Golton – Liberal Democrats
- Cllr Matthew Robinson – Conservative Party

2.7 Candidates have been provided with a central mailbox through which to raise enquiries relating to the election process, and this has been shared with

district partners in an effort to provide consistent service and information throughout the months leading up to May elections. Details are also published on the MCA Hub website.

Statutory Booklet

- 2.8 The Combined Authority, in partnership with West Yorkshire local authorities, is leading on strategic communications for the Mayoral Election, including the production of the statutory election booklet which is required to be distributed to all registered voters in West Yorkshire.
- 2.9 For Mayoral Elections the CARO is legally required to produce an election booklet which must be delivered to West Yorkshire's 1.7million registered voters. The booklet is a statutory requirement and as such will be factual, containing details of the date of the election, polling places, instruction on how to register to vote, and how to cast a ballot.
- 2.10 This booklet will include an address from each candidate, for which there will be a charge applied in accordance with regulations.
- 2.11 The contract cost of the printing and distribution of the election booklet for the West Yorkshire Mayoral election is £650,000, and a contribution of £4,000 per candidate has been determined. This is comparable with contributions required by partner MCAs.
- 2.12 The CARO undertook a benchmarking exercise with other MCA's in relation to the setting of this amount, to ensure the contribution requested in from West Yorkshire candidates was consistent and fair. The 4 amounts benchmarked from other MCA's were from 2017, with the average cost to the candidate being £27.01 per 10,000 electors. The amount set by the CARO for the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area is £23.53 per 10,000 electors, and no uplift has been added for any increase to printing costs since 2017.
- 2.13 Following the publication of the notice of election on 25 March, candidates will be required to submit their nominations and election address no later than 8 April.
- 2.14 Production will begin immediately, with delivery commencing 16 April. The booklet will also be published online. We will also ensure that key information from the booklet about the role of the Mayor and how to vote is available in a number of accessible formats, including: braille, audio / video, large print, easy read, and language translation.
- 2.15 The Committee have previously enquired regarding the booklet's green credentials and those of the printer involved. A sustainability report has been provided for this purpose (**appendix 1**), which in brief sets out that:
 - All paper purchased and used in the production of the booklet and paper wrap is guaranteed to be FSC accredited, i.e. sourced from forests managed in an environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable manner.

- Sustainable ink and binding material will be used in line with European regulations, sourced from a supplier certified for the energy management system ISO 50001.
 - The booklet will be fully recyclable.
 - In lieu of a traditional envelope, a 'poly-wrap' will be used, a new technology using only paper and is therefore fully recyclable.
- 2.16 In addition, the final stage of the production process being data preparation, mail sortation, personalisation, fulfilment and paper wrapping and despatch will take place in West Yorkshire.
- 2.17 The Committee attention is also drawn to the following appended policies from the contracted printer, Print Image Network:
- CCPO7 Environmental Policy
 - CCP11 Corporate Social Responsibility Policy

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 Officers have worked to ensure that the production of the statutory election booklet is produced in such a way that it is sustainable, energy efficient and reflects the regional ambition to tackle the climate emergency.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Care has been taken to ensure that the election booklet is fully accessible across the electorate of the region.
- 4.2 The production of the booklet in West Yorkshire supports the Combined Authority's commitment to good economic growth.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.
- 5.2 The cost of the statutory booklet is met through the approved budget for election delivery. Reflecting the need to put in place Covid secure arrangements, it is possible that some of the cost of this will fall outside of the approved budget. Work is ongoing with Government and districts to understand what these costs might be and what financial aid is available to assist delivery.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.
- 6.2 Officers have taken advice where appropriate to ensure that all legal and statutory obligations are met.

7. Staffing Implications

7.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

8. External Consultees

8.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

9. Recommendations

9.1 That the Committee note the contents of this report.

10. Background Documents

None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sustainability Report

Appendix 2 - CCPO7 Environmental Policy

Appendix 3 - CCP11 Corporate Social Responsibility Policy