

**Select Committee for Electoral
Participation**

**Friday 14 December 2018, at 3pm
in Annexe 2
at Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury**

Agenda

1. Chairman's opening remarks and introductions.
2. Guest Speakers : School Representatives.
3. Apologies for absence.
4. Members to declare an interest in any matters to be discussed at the meeting.
5. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2018.
6. Progress Briefing and Update from Officers.
7. Any other business (at Chair's discretion).
8. Date of Next Meeting.

**Jan Britton
Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillor Melia (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, L Horton, P Hughes, Webb

Rt. Hon John Spellar

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**Minutes of the Select Committee
for Electoral Participation**

**19th October at 3.00p.m.
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Melia (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, L Horton, P Hughes and
Webb.
Rt. Hon. John Spellar MP

5/18 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

6/18 Progress Briefing and Update from Officers

Members received a report in respect of the actions that had been agreed at the first meeting of the Electoral Participation Select Committee to assist and drive the review of Electoral Registration activity and support the work of the Committee.

Members felt that a special effort should be made to engage with particular groups within the community and progress on this was recorded in the report as follows:

- current initiatives were in place for individuals undertaking citizenship and data was supplied to produce invitations to register;
- Council Tax mailings were already utilised and included leaflets to encourage registration;
- access to data sets that were available in respect of young people leaving care and adults with learning disabilities was being explored and a detailed analysis would be provided at the conclusion of the canvass;

Select Committee on Electoral Participation – 19th October 2018

- levels of Service Voter Registration had been examined and currently there were 52 electors registered as service voters. A contact had been identified through the British Legion and discussion was ongoing regarding literature that could be distributed to those currently in the armed forces to promote registration;
- the elections team was currently producing a Customer Engagement Matrix which demonstrated customer contact with the Council and the variations in the way they contacted the Council. This would identify reference to electoral registration.

It had been agreed with neighbourhoods that the elections team would be provided a list of all new tenants on a monthly basis. Officers would be co-ordinating a meeting with all Town Leads to ensure a consistent approach and review the requirements for each Town area so strategies could be targeted appropriately. The Electoral Services Manager was currently working on a Data Sharing agreement across all council departments. Other initiatives that had been identified included:

- training outreach officers that were visiting properties to promote registration;
- Neighbourhood officers promoting registration at the Safer Six community events;
- all town leads to be responsible for ensuring that, where there was any customer contact, Electoral Registration was promoted – this was especially important during the canvass period with regard to the Household Enquiry Form (HEF).

Members had been provided with a table that illustrated the decrease in the electorate in March 2018 and the new registrations received between March and September 2018.

During the canvass, households were issued with the Household Enquiry Form (HEF), any household that did not respond was then targeted by a personal visit from a canvasser, a follow up letter would then be sent and the household given fourteen days to respond, followed by a further letter notifying removal from the register.

The table demonstrated a 52% increase in the number of new registrations compared to the number of electors that had dropped off following the canvass in 2017. Full increases in the electorate figures would be presented to the next Committee.

Select Committee on Electoral Participation – 19th October 2018

It was reported that there had been a lot of engagement in Smethwick, however some had chosen not to respond to letters and had been removed. Some individuals were not aware that they are eligible to vote and officers intend to meet with community leaders to address this.

Members were notified that it was an offence not to return the Household Enquiry Form but not an offence to decline to register.

Members proposed that a fine be imposed for not returning the Household Enquiry Form and asked that the possibility of a penalty being incurred for refusing to register could be imposed. Officers would confirm if and how this could be undertaken with the Council's legal officers.

The canvass at the beginning of August delivered 134,200 initial Household Enquiry Forms and the response rate was currently at 82% compared with 69% at this point last year. So far 8000 Invitations to Register had been issued and these potential electors would be followed up to ensure that they registered.

Members were advised that there had been a successful response to telephone canvassing and this was a cost effective method of engagement.

Engagement via radio advertisements on Raj radio had been positive. This method was intended to reach low responding areas where language barriers may have been an issue.

Social Media platforms showed videos on how to respond to forms.

The communications team had considered how to promote the message to the right people. The Electoral Participation Officer had been invited to speak at a National event.

It was noted that despite efforts there had been lack of response from people with Gambian and Sudanese background. The Right Honourable John Spellar MP would be visiting the Gambian Centre in the near future and would discuss this matter with the Gambian community leaders.

Issues in respect of Houses of Multiple Occupancy meant that an accurate data set was difficult to capture and people moved on a regular basis. Private Landlords should have a duty to see that HEF's were returned.

Select Committee on Electoral Participation – 19th October 2018

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Single occupancy forms would be investigated to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds listed at the properties would be followed up.

It was suggested that registration forms could be distributed at schools and colleges.

Town Champions/ambassadors was a suggestion at the last Committee meeting and officers were making arrangements.

An analysis of those in receipt of Housing benefit and the level of registration along with a snapshot of private housing would be developed.

The Electoral Services Manager would investigate if the travelling community with a permanent base had been included within the Canvass.

The Committee thanked Elections team for all their commitment and the work undertaken so far.

(The meeting ended at 4.05p.m.)

Contact Officer: Shane Parkes Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3190
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Electoral Participation Committee

14 December 2018

Progress Briefing

1. Actions from last meeting

- 1.1 Action: Members proposed that a fine was imposed for not returning the Household Enquiry Form (HEF) and asked that the possibility of a penalty being incurred for refusing to register could be imposed. Officers would confirm if and how this could be undertaken with the legal department of the Council.
- 1.2 Progress: Under Individual Electoral Registration (IER) a civil penalty may be imposed on those who have been issued with a requirement to register notice and failed to register by the date stated in the notice. The amount of the Civil Penalty is currently £80. Any costs associated with the enforcement of the Civil Penalty notice are paid by the Local Authority. Any money that is collected as a result of the Civil Penalty must be returned to Cabinet Office to be paid into the consolidated fund.

Penalty for failure to respond to a HEF: By law a person who has received a Household Enquiry Form must provide the information that is required to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), whilst there is no requirement for the form itself to be returned, there is a criminal penalty of a fine up to a maximum of £1000 for failing to provide the information. Again unless specified by the court any costs associated with this are to the Local Authority.

In both cases due to the processes associated with IER any form of prosecutions would involve a significant workload with and financial gains being returned to Cabinet Office.

- 1.3 Action: An analysis of those in receipt of Housing Benefit and the level of registration along with a snapshot of private housing would be developed.
- 1.4 Progress: Officers are in discussion with the relevant Directorate. The Annual canvass has now concluded so officers will now be able to concentrate on the data matching and investigation exercise. The Elections team will provide a further update on this.

2. Canvass and Publication of the Revised Register.

2.1 HEF Responses

The revised register was published on 1 December. Officers are extremely pleased with the results of this year's canvass activities. The response rate for the HEF is 93% (125,500) properties for this year, compared to 82% (108,500) for last year's canvass. The number of non-responding properties this year is 8600. Officers have established that of the 8600 properties that have not responded 3,100 have been confirmed as "void/empty" from council tax matching. This means that 4% of properties across the borough have not responded as opposed to 19% last year. Officers would advise that the increase in response rate this year has been delivered with a significant saving of £24,450 compared to last year's canvass.

2.2 Invitations to Register

It is important to note that under the IER registration system, responses to the HEF do not result in automatic registrations. Currently there are 6500 outstanding Invitations to register across the borough that have not been included in the 1 December register. Pending electors are the elections team priority all year round and the focus from December to March will be to encourage and obtain registrations ahead of the May elections.

2.3 Electorate 1 December

The electorate as at 1 December is 221,258. A breakdown of electorate per ward has been shown in Appendix A. During the canvass the elections team administered 20,918 amendments to the register which has resulted in an increase of 2800 electors overall. Officers are very encouraged by this response and pleased with the responses to the new initiatives introduced this year. There are currently 21,971 postal voters within the borough that equates to 9.9% of the electorate. The current number of electors that have opted out the open register is 103,450 which is 46.7%.

2.4. Summary of canvass activities

At the last meeting of the committee officers presented a report which detailed the initiatives undertaken for this year's canvass. Significant results have been seen this year not only in terms of increasing the electorate but also ensuring that the register is accurate which is also vitally important. Sandwell has a very transient population and this is demonstrated by the numbers of amendments to the register. This is why the need to interrogate and use existing data files from existing council resources is so important and will continue to form a critical part of the services engagement framework moving forward. At the next meeting of the Committee an update will be provided as to the results from the data matching initiatives.

**SANDWELL Metropolitan Borough Council
REGISTER OF ELECTORS 2018/19**

ELECTORATE TOTALS PER WARD

WARD	ELECTORATE	ABSENT VOTERS	% OF ABSENT VOTERS
Abbey	8,236	720	8.7
Blackheath	9,108	918	10
Bristnall	8,877	817	9.2
Charlemont with Grove Vale	9,168	940	10.2
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	9,865	900	9.1
Friar Park	8,637	638	7.3
Great Barr with Yew Tree	9,593	928	9.6
Great Bridge	9,325	858	9.2
Greets Green & Lyng	8,751	749	8.5
Hateley Heath	9,715	822	8.4
Langley	9,062	1,154	12.7
Newton	8,541	882	10.3
Old Warley	8,970	1,233	13.7
Oldbury	9,223	1,219	13.2
Princes End	9,036	851	9.4
Rowley	9,332	1,175	12.5
Smethwick	9,238	722	12.5
Soho & Victoria	9,527	1,081	11.3
St. Paul's	9,609	1,022	10.6
Tipton Green	10,170	1,008	9.9
Tividale	9,018	896	9.9
Wednesbury North	9,011	683	7.5
Wednesbury South	9,718	953	9.8
West Bromwich Central	9,528	801	8.4
Total	221,258	21,971	9.9

School Voter Registration Surgeries

13/09/ & 27/10	Uplands Primary School PTA Voter Registration Surgery	All Community for mainly Smethwick residents	28
16/10/2018	Galton Bridge Primary PTA Voter Registration Surgery	All Community for mainly Smethwick residents	6
20/09/2018	Dudley College Freshers Fayre Voter Registration Checking and Canvass Form Update	Sandwell Students 16+ attending Dudley College	7
11/09/2018	Sandwell College Freshers Fayre Voter Registration Checking and Canvass Form Update	Sandwell Students 16+ attending Sandwell College	11
13/09/2018	Sandwell 6 th Freshers Fayre Voter Registration Checking and Canvass Form Update	Sandwell Students 16+ attending Sandwell 6 th	13
25/09/2018	George Salter Registration Surgery with Make Your Mark	6 th Form Students from West Brom	25
26/09/2018 & 12/09/2018	Q3 Tipton 6 th Form Registration Surgery with Make Your Mark & Citizencard Surgery	6 th Form Students from Tipton	23
27/09/2018	Oldbury Academy 6 th Form Registration Surgery with Make Your Mark	6 th Form Students from Oldbury	4
28/10/2018	Healthfutures Registration Surgery with Make Your Mark	Students interested in health studies from all of Sandwell	4

School Democracy Programme

<p>Smethwick</p> <p>Holly Lodge – Student Ambassadors Programme running with 3 New Ambassadors Events Held Vision 2030 Consultation and vote held in October 2018, Mock Elections on Vote at 16 June 2017, Equaliteas workshop participants in 2018, Student Democracy Assembly and Student ID Scheme Participants. 40 students registered to vote under ID card scheme since September 2018. Parliament Week Participants “Wonder Woman” where Students Voted on their most influential young woman.</p> <p>Shireland - Meet the Mayor, Councillor and MP events held as well as voter registration surgery for 6th form . Main contact has now left will re connect with the school in the new term.</p> <p>Galton Valley Primary: Working with PTA to host Voter Registration Surgery in New Term, previously held surgeries during IN The Know Events. Hosted Democracy Workshop with Student Leadership on 16/10/2018.</p> <p>Uplands Primary: Working with PTA to host Voter Registration Surgery in New Term, previously held surgeries during IN The Know Events. Held 2 surgeries registering to vote parents and will host a student leadership workshop.</p>
<p>West Brom</p> <p>George Salter- Student Ambassadors Programme running with 5 New Ambassadors Events Held Vision 2030 Consultation and vote in July 2018 , Mock Elections on Vote at 16 September 2017,</p>

<p>Student Democracy Assembly, Equaliteas Event participants and Student ID Scheme Participants also regular Democracy slot in Student Magazine . Meet a Cllr Session participants with Cllr Luke Giles during Parliament Week on Tuesday 13th November attended by 15 participants.</p>
<p>Healthfutures- Student Ambassadors Programme with 4 ambassadors (New Ambassadors to be recruited 2018), Voter Registration Surgeries and Mock Elections Held on Votes at 16, Student Leadership Elections also organised/conducted. Will be delivering Democracy workshops in December 2018.</p>
<p>Phoenix Academy- Student Ambassadors Programme (New Ambassadors to be recruited 2018) Mock Election Votes at 16, Student Voter Registration Surgeries, Meet the MP(Tom Watson participants in 2016 Parliament Week) , Mock Pre Election Referendum Debate organised in April 2018.</p>
<p>Q3 Great Barr- Student Ambassadors Programme (New Ambassadors to be recruited 2018) Meet the Minister & Mayor Events, Student Registration Surgeries, Aspire Programme Participants (What is Democracy? and My Manifesto workshop participants with Cllr Melia). What is Leadership Workshop held on 5th October 2018.</p>
<p>Sandwell Academy- Interested in School Democracy Ambassadors Programme, Assembly with 6th Form and Work Experience Event also delivered in September 2017 with Cllr Shackelton .</p>
<p>Oldbury</p>
<p>Bristnall Hall Academy- Teacher based Democracy Ambassador Individual Voter Registration Submissions and now a Student ID Scheme Participant, Sixth Form Democracy Sessions also held before its closure last year. Has shown interest in Democracy Ambassadors Programme will chase up in New Term. John Spellar hosted Parliament Week event 2017. Cllr Goult also has attended the school on several occasions. School interested in Vision 2030 also PTA Parents registration event in the New Year.</p>
<p>Q3 Langley- Student Leadership Elections organised, Meet the Mayor and also MP sessions organised, Vision 2030 Consultation organised, Equaliteas event participants . Parliament week workshop and National Democracy week participants. Democracy Assembly and workshop delivered on 14th November with Cllr Goult also voted on Make Your Mark on 1st October.</p>
<p>Perryfields- Year 12/13 Parents Evening Voter Registration Surgeries and Meet the MP session (John Spellar) Target was 6th Form Students (which is now closed) therefore plan will be to Hold ID Card Surgeries to target 16 year olds</p>
<p>Ormiston Sandwell Academy- Teacher based Democracy Ambassador Individual Voter Registration Submissions to teacher ambassador, 6th form no longer offered will now review in new term and offer Student ID scheme as an alternative.</p>
<p>Oldbury Academy- Student Democracy Ambassadors, Voter Registration Surgeries, Work Experience organised, Democracy Assemblies, Student ID Surgery for Post 16, Parliament Trip and also Meet the MP session hosted. Make Your Mark Participants in 27th September 2018</p>
<p>George Betts Primary: Organised and hosted Student Leadership Elections since 2016 to 2018 .</p>
<p>Meadows Sports College: Smart ITR's and letters sent to all 18 year olds to register to vote as it's a special needs school</p>
<p>Wednesbury</p>
<p>Wodensborough: Sandwell Vision 2030 consultation organised , Aspire to Inspire event participants, Student ID and Voter Registration Surgery hosts, will be working with the Student Leadership team in the New term.</p>
<p>Wood Green- Assembly and 6th Form Voter registration surgery held in 2017 Sixth form contact now left the academy and will re-establish new link in the new term also promote the Student ID card and work with Cllr Hughes on delivering the democracy workshops.</p>
<p>Stuart Bathurst- Voter Registration awareness assembly and interested in Student ID programme</p>

Tipton
Q3 Tipton (Ace Academy)- Democracy Workshop held during Parliament Week Friday 16 th November 2018, Student ID cards Surgery Hosted 32 issued , Interested in Student Ambassadors Programme
RSA Academy- 3 Democracy Workshops booked in for November and December , Vision 2030 participants Student leadership and Democracy Ambassadors programme participants new Ambassador recruited, Student ID cards Surgery Hosted 14 cards issued
Rowley
St Michaels- Working with School to host Surgeries for ID card and Voter registration also looking to host meet the MP event James Morris visited the school on 9 th November . 3 Workshops booked in January.
Ormiston Forge Academy – Working with School Engagement Team with regards to hosting Vision 2030 event and also Student ID card Surgery 1 student interested in becoming an ambassador.
Westminster School- Teacher lead School Democracy Lead (now left) also all 18 year olds sent letter and Smart ITR form as it's a special school

College and Youth Activities

Sandwell College- Freshers Fair Voter Registration Surgeries and also Large Open day events Surgeries
Sandwell 6th- Freshers Fair Voter Registration Surgeries and looking to do Democracy Workshops and Student ID Car Schemes Surgery in New Term
Dudley College- Freshers Fair Voter Registration Surgeries, Local democracy Week Event, Student Voice Events and Workshops
YMCA supported Youth : Democracy Workshop held on 30 th October with 12 participants
Motiv8: 2 Democracy workshops held with the group_2017

Primary Schools

Uplands Manor hosted 2 of our PTA Surgeries a total of 28 records checked with **16** having their HEF form or ITR form processed. Galton Bridge Primary are our next School to host this soon.

Secondary Schools

A total of 4 Surgeries were held at George Salter, Q3 Tipton (2) and Oldbury Academy with 48 students having their records checked with **16** HEFS or ITR's being processed.

Colleges

Fresher's Fayre Surgeries were held at Dudley College , Sandwell College and Sandwell 6th with 31 records being checked with **15** HEFS & ITR's processed

Citizencard Applications : 133 Citizencard applications have been received with over 90 being 16 year olds.

Total Number of Too Young Electors on the System is **308**.

Total Number of Electors (16/17) **1.407**

Make Your Mark National Youth Vote

Polling Stations were set up in 7 Schools and 1 College a Total of **1338** votes cast with Knife Crime being identified as the most concern for Young People.

	Healthfutures	Oldbury Academy	Dudley College	George Salter	Q3 Tipton	Q3 Langlely	Holly Lodge	Area Total
Mental Health	22	4	15	28	10	81	20	180
End Period Poverty	5	2	5	41	4	16	12	85
Votes at 16	6	2	17	30	8	35	8	106
Knife Crime	19	3	11	40	15	291	23	402
Curriculum	9	3	2	26	6	97	16	159
Youth Services	4	2	0	9	2	14	1	32
Equal Pay	12	6	4	37	16	16	23	114
Homelessness	6	6	3	15	11	32	11	84
Transport	5	6	5	60	3	13	6	98
Refugees	18	1	1	25	5	15	3	68
Total Votes	106	35	63	311	80	610	123	1328

Voting in Sandwell

School Elections have been held at George Betts, Uplands and Lyng Primary with Q3 Langlely to hold theirs in the next couple of weeks.

Latvian General Election: This was the first time this was held in Sandwell at Thimblemill Library 450 votes were cast at the Polling Station we will now be working with Sakta the community group with regards to workshops around Electoral Participation.

Vision 2030 Voting

As part of the Vision 2030 Consultation we have facilitated 5 schools to vote on their top 3 priorities again setting up Polling Stations within the school and running it similar to real life election with well over 2000 students participating in this, without the strong links developed through the Electoral Participation work with the schools the Council would not have been able to run the workshops or held the consultation/vote in such a quick time frame

National Reputation

The work that we have done in both the Community and Schools is nationally recognised as good practice over 10 councils across the country have asked for advice and assistance on ideas on how to engage with schools and the community by AEA, Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office.

The Minister of the Constitution and the Cabinet Office have visited us in Sandwell and have asked for our opinion on policy on areas of the Canvass review and ID.

Parliament Week and National Democracy Week regularly celebrated with great success in Sandwell with high levels of social media engagement as well.