

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 15th November 2018

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WARDS: All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION**

VOTING TASK AND FINISH GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. **Purpose of Report**

To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the terms of reference for the Voting Task and Finish Group.

2. **Recommendations/Proposed Action**

That the Committee note the agreed terms of reference for the Voting Task and Finish Group.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3.1 **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy priorities**

Participation in local democracy by residents allows them to express their views on all priorities of the Joint Wellbeing Strategy.

3.2 **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Participation in civic life also allows residents to express their views on all outcomes of the Five Year Plan.

4. **Other Implications**

a) **Financial**

The work to be undertaken by the Task & Finish Group will be covered within existing staff budgets. Any financial implications of the review's recommendations will be reported back in the final report to be taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2019.

b) **Risk Management**

There are no corporate risks associated with the adoption of the Terms of Reference included as Appendix A. As above, any risks associated with the final recommendations will be reported to the Committee at the review's conclusion.

c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The work of the Task & Finish Group will be fully conversant with the requirements of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and other legislation affecting the policy area.

d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The adoption of the recommendations does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment. Should the final recommendations necessitate such an exercise, it will be carried out as required.

5. **Supporting Information**

Background

5.1 The matter was first raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12th April 2018. The initial agenda item focused on the 'Votes At 16' campaign to extend the franchise to younger citizens. However, the debate widened out to other issues regarding public participation in local democracy. Given the imminent postal pilot (held at the local elections on 3rd May 2018), any review of the matter was also asked to examine confidence in the security of the ballot.

5.2 This matter was then raised at full Council on 24th April 2018 (under the item on the Annual Scrutiny Report). The following motion was passed unanimously:

"That the Council resolve to support the principle of reducing the national voting age to 16; take an active leadership role in any appropriate campaign(s) to further this objective; and requests scrutiny to establish a task and finish group to examine and propose practical measures to improve the security of the ballot, including potentially voter identification, and promote youth participation."

5.3 As a result, this Task & Finish Group has been commissioned. It will look at 3 main areas; the effectiveness of the Slough Postal Pilot of May 2018, any other measures which may increase confidence in the process and youth participation.

Terms of Reference

5.4 The terms of reference were agreed via email by the members of the Task & Finish Group on 9th October 2018. They were subsequently circulated to the wider membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval, and have not been amended as a result of this and are set out below:

To investigate and make recommendations on the following matters:

1.1 The effectiveness of the Slough Postal Pilot undertaken in May 2018 and measures to improve security of postal vote process arising from the pilot for future elections;

1.2 Any other measures that could be introduced that may increase confidence in the integrity of the election process; and

- 1.3 Methods that can be employed to promote youth participation in public life and awareness of the need to register and vote at 18.

Membership

- 5.5 The Task & Finish Group will include the following Councillors:

- Cllr Minhas
- Cllr D Parmar
- Cllr R Sandhu
- Cllr Sharif

Timeframes and Work Programme

- 5.6 The final report with recommendations will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th March 2019; the Committee will be asked to approve and adopt the recommendations. Following this, the Committee will then assume responsibility for monitoring the progress of these recommendations. Officers will update the Committee on this as appropriate.
- 5.7 In order to compile its final report, the Task & Finish Group will hold two meetings in early 2019 as follow:

Security of Ballot

This meeting will cover the following areas:

- The Slough Postal Pilot
- Initiatives arising from the pilot which may be replicated in future
- The Integrity Plan (Slough Borough Council's policy on electoral integrity matters)

Youth Participation

This will meet with officers and Slough Youth Parliament to discuss the progress made by this body and its lessons for wider issues of youth participation.

6. Comment of Other Committees

The meeting of full Council's request for this work is outlined in paragraph 5.2.

7. Conclusion

This report is intended to provide the Committee with information and guidance on the work to be undertaken by the Task and Finish Group.

8. Appendices Attached

None

9. Background Papers

None