

## AGENDA ITEM 9

### REPORT TO THE TEES VALLEY COMBINED AUTHORITY

30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

## APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICERS 2024

### SUMMARY

Following parliamentary approval of the Tees Valley Combined Authority (Election of Mayor) Order 2016, the Combined Authority must appoint one of its officers, or one of the officers of a constituent council, to be the combined authority returning officer CARO in relation to the election. In addition, this report will consider the appointment of the Police Area Returning Officer PARO.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Combined Authority appoint Mike Greene the Local Returning Officer of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as the Combined Authority Returning Officer in relation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral Election 2024.

### DETAIL

- 1) In May 2024 as it currently stands Local Authorities in the Tees Valley will have the following scheduled polls

<b>Darlington</b>	9 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
<b>Hartlepool</b>	9 May	Locals, PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
<b>Middlesbrough</b>	9 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
<b>Redcar</b>	9 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
<b>Stockton</b>	9 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral

- 2) In respect of local elections each authority must appoint a Returning Officer (RO) in accordance with s35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.
- 3) Each Combined Authority is also required to appoint a combined authority returning officer, who will have responsibility for giving notice of the election; the nomination procedures; encouraging participation; ensuring that candidates and their agents comply with the requirements as to the content of candidate election addresses and with the procedures for submitting them; producing and distributing the booklet to every voter containing the candidates' election addresses; the collation and calculation of votes given for each candidate; and the declaration of the overall result.

- 4) The local returning officer for each constituent council in the combined authority areas will be responsible for the conduct of the poll in their area, including the provision of polling stations, publication of the notice of poll, the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers and the verification and counting of the votes in their area.
- 5) The legislation provides that the Combined Authority must appoint one of its officers or one of the officers of a constituent council, to be the combined authority returning officer.
- 6) Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the relevant Secretary of State will appoint a PARO for each police area. Mike Greene the Local Returning Officer of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is currently the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) and intends to apply to continue in this role. This application for appointment as the PARO is supported by all Local Returning Officers in the Cleveland Force area.
- 7) Whilst the appointment of the PARO is not a consideration for Tees Valley Combined Authority there will be an element of overlap in both roles and therefore it's important that both appointments are considered together. Stockton fulfilled the CARO and PARO roles in 2021 the first time that the two polls with a regional element were combined and can rely on this experience to support the 2024 polls.
- 8) It should also be acknowledged that the PARO will have similar responsibilities as the CARO the largest difference being the PARO doesn't have to design and produce a booklet. However the PARO will need to approve each candidates election address material for hosting on the Home Office website.
- 9) Due to the combined nature of elections in 2024 there will be significant demands on resources and as such it will be necessary to ensure sufficient resources are provided.
- 10) Options include the appointment of a separate CARO and PARO with regional support provided by their respective authorities. Alternatively a single person could be appointed to be both CARO and PARO with support being provided by their respective authority.
- 11) The appointment of returning officers has been considered by Tees Valley Chief Executives and their preferred option is that a single appointment is made and that Stockton continue to fulfil these roles.
- 12) Stockton-on-Tees have previously led The Combined Authority Mayoral in 2017, 2021 and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2012, 2016 and 2021 for the Cleveland force area.
- 13) Given the experience in Stockton, Tees Valley Chief Executives are nominating Mike Greene the Local Returning Officer of Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council to apply to the DLUC to be the Police Area Returning Officer for 2024.

- 14) Taking this into account, it is recommended that Mike Greene is recommend to the Combined Authority for appointment as the Combined Authority Returning Officer in relation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral Election 2024.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15) There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 16) Each combined authority is required to appoint a combined authority returning officer. The relevant secretary of state will appoint a Police Area Returning Officer.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 17) There are always risks involved with every election, but experienced elections staff, rigorous planning and training and tried and tested procedures, in particular, help to minimise the risks.

### **CONSULTATION**

- 18) The proposal has been discussed with Members and Officers of the Constituent Councils and of the Combined Authority.

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