

AGENDA ITEM 7

**REPORT TO THE TEES VALLEY
COMBINED AUTHORITY CABINET**

31 JANUARY 2019

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

APPOINTMENT OF RETURNING OFFICERS 2020

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 Cabinet appoint Julie Danks, 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 2020.

DETAIL

1. In May 2020 as it currently stands Local Authorities in the Tees Valley will have the following scheduled polls

Darlington	7 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
Hartlepool	7 May	All out Locals following a Boundary Review, Parish, PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
Middlesbrough	7 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
Redcar	7 May	PCC & Tees Valley Mayoral
Stockton	7 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. In reality, each Police area will nominate a Local Returning Officer to submit an application to the Cabinet Office to be PARO.
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. 2020 will be the first time that two polls with a regional element will be combined.
8. 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 candidate's election address material for hosting on the Home Office website.
9. Due to the combined nature of elections in 2020 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 at their meeting on the 16th January, and their preferred option is that a single appointment is made.
12. Stockton-on-Tees have previously led The Combined Authority Mayoral in 2017 and the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2012 and 2016 for the Cleveland force area.
13. Given the experience in Stockton, Tees Valley Chief Executives are nominating Julie Danks the local returning officer of Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council to apply to the Cabinet Office to be the Police Area Returning Officer for 2020.
14. Taking this into account, it is recommended that Julie Danks is recommend to the Combined Authority for appointment as the Combined Authority Returning Officer in relation to the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayoral Election 2020.

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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