

Agenda Item: 10

Meeting: Council

Date: 18 June 2009

Subject: Report of the Returning Officer

Report of: Returning Officer to Central Bedfordshire Council Election, June 2009

Summary: The report outlines the outcome of the election to the new Central Bedfordshire Council.

Contact Officer: Rob Mills, Committee Services Manager

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Central Bedfordshire Council election results be noted.

Appendix:

Results of Central Bedfordshire Council election 4 June 2009.

RETURNING OFFICER REPORT TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL JUNE 2009 ELECTIONS

1. There were 3 tiers of election in 2009 in the Central Beds area ; the European (the CB area with the largest electorate, some 192,000, in East of England region) , Local Government elections for Central Bedfordshire Council (first elections to 28wards with 66 councillors) and Dunstable Town Council (6 wards , 21 councillors). The other parish elections scheduled for 2009 were not contested following the receipt of valid nominations.
2. The Bedfordshire (Structural Changes) Order 2008 Part 6 dealt with electoral matters and designated the proper officer of SBDC as Returning Officer for the 2009 election. This in part recognised the timing of the elections early on in the life of the Central Bedfordshire Council and the increased risk that the preparation may be subject to at a time of major change. The Shadow Executive Committee confirmed the RO appointment at its meeting on 25th November 2008.
3. The costs of the combined election will be allocated between the budget provided by the Ministry of Justice and the CBC budget using the MoJ guidance and the usual accounting conventions in line with good financial practice. There are statutory requirements regarding the completion of the Election accounts and meeting these is the responsibility of the LRO/RO. This will be achieved in conjunction with the Director of Resources and his team.
4. The objective of the elections team throughout has been to manage the additional complexity of the task, keeping to the tight statutory timetable whilst meeting the high standards expected by the public and other bodies including the Electoral Commission. There were more than 500 people involved on election day at the 190 polling stations and the two count centres. The European election count was carried out by some 90 people on the 7th June.
5. I would like to place on record my thanks to all those who supported the process in the run up to the day and on the day. Without their (and their managers') support the election just could not happen. The process is always an intense and demanding one and this time has been additionally challenging as we strived to make the first CBC elections not only an efficient process but also a CBC shop window. The media coverage of the Count gave CBC prominence at the regional level and in early morning national broadcasts. The long day/night/morning proved worthwhile.

There were "moments" and many of them during the weeks leading up to the day and on the day !

I would like to place on record my personal tribute to in particular ; Brian Dunleavy , Barbara Morris , Kathrin John and Stephen Cooke for , not only their specialist skill and knowledge , but also their total commitment and the sheer hard mental and physical slog over a sustained period.

6. There were a total of 318 valid candidate nominations this time and communication with political parties, candidates and agents at that key stage and throughout the process is crucial. Two formal meetings were held with candidates and election agents and feedback from these sessions and during the process has been very positive. I complete a performance report to the electoral commission and any further feedback on the administration of these elections would be welcomed for that purpose and for the conduct of future elections in the area.
7. I am pleased to say liaison with, and support from Bedfordshire police colleagues was again very good. My thanks to them.
8. The attached appendix sets out those people that have been elected Councillors with a two year term until elections in 2011. These elections are expected to be based on warding arrangements following the boundary review due to start next month.

I wish the Council well on the next stages of its journey.

Jon Ruddick

Local Returning Officer/ Returning Officer