

RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

APPROVAL FOR SUSPENSION OF THE BY-ELECTIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REFERENDUMS LISTED BELOW AND ALL FUTURE REQUESTS FOR BY-ELECTIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING REFERENDUMS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT

Decision made

To approve the suspension of the by-elections and neighbourhood planning referendums listed and all future requests for by-elections and neighbourhood planning referendums until further notice with immediate effect

Made by Terence Herbert, Returning Officer and Counting Officer

Background

1. As the Returning Officer and Counting Officer, I am responsible for any matters relating to elections, by-elections, neighbourhood planning referendums, parish polls and council tax referendums in the County of Wiltshire on behalf of Wiltshire Council. The power to make a decision in respect of this rests with me as Returning Officer/Counting Officer.
2. In accordance with the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006, Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 and the Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 the following by-elections and neighbourhood planning referendums were scheduled as listed:

Seagry Neighbourhood Planning Referendum	Thursday 26 March 2020
By Brook Unitary Division By-election	Thursday 2 April 2020
Bratton Parish Council By-election	Thursday 2 April 2020
Melksham Without Parish Council By-election	Thursday 23 April 2020
Chippenham Town Council (Hardenhuish Ward)	Thursday 23 April 2020
Clyffe Pypard Parish Council	Thursday 23 April 2020
Malmesbury Town Council	Thursday 23 April 2020
Tockenham Neighbourhood Planning Referendum	Tuesday 2 June 2020

However due to the current situation regarding the Covid-19 virus, I have taken regard of the following advice:

- Government advice regarding the Covid-19 virus on self-isolation and social distancing,
- Local Resilience Forum declaring the situation as a major incident,
- Electoral Commission guidance to the Government on the postponement of the 7 May 2020 Polls
- Recent Cabinet Office advice; and
- Advice from Wiltshire Council's Director of Public Health

In the interests of staff and public safety having regard to the above guidance and advice I have therefore decided that the scheduled elections and neighbourhood planning referendums as listed above and any subsequent requests for by-elections and referendums are suspended immediately until further notice. This will be kept under review as the situation develops and I will determine how these matters will proceed in the light of relevant legislation and guidance at the appropriate time.

Conflict of Interest

3. Not applicable.

Other options considered

4. The only other option would be to continue with the by-elections and neighbourhood planning referendums as scheduled. However, the strong and overriding advice provided by Government and Wiltshire Council's Director of Public Health makes this option untenable because of the significant implications for staff and public safety.



Made by:

Terence Herbert, Returning Officer and Counting Officer

Date: 20 March 2020