



# **Elections and Electoral Registration Review Panel Annual Report 2017**

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# Electoral Registration

## 1.0 Registration Activity

### Household Notification Letters

- 1.1 In the week commencing 6 February 2017, Household Notification Letters (HNLs) were sent out to all properties in the Borough. The letter identified everyone who was fully registered at the property, and advised occupants how to complete their registration if they were not listed.
- 1.2 This exercise was first carried out in January 2015 and proved to be a useful exercise in ensuring the accuracy of the electoral register. This would not only act as a prompt to electors who had not completed their individual registration but would also provide new residents who had moved during the annual canvass to update their records on the electoral register.
- 1.3 The success of sending the HNLs can be seen as in the two week period following the issue of the HNLs, just under 1,130 electors registered to vote. However, 280 of these were duplicate applications, which is still a continuing problem in the registration process.

### Electoral Registration

- 1.4 The deadline to register for the County elections was Monday, 10 April 2017. Electors who had submitted their applications had until Tuesday, 25 April to be verified to be included on the election register. If any new applicants could not be verified automatically, they were contacted to provide supporting evidence during this period. There were no problems with the Government Digital Service (GDS) and the online registration system for these elections.
- 1.5 The announcement of the General Election on 18 April; 2017 resulted in a large number of registrations being made. From 18 April, to 22 May 2017, there were over 6,100 registrations. Unfortunately, of these, 2,315 were duplicate applications either from existing electors or from electors submitting multiple applications.
- 1.6 Duplicate registration remains a significant problem. Checking duplicate entries is a resource intensive process, as every application is checked to make sure the correct details are added to the register at the correct address.

### Absent Vote Applications

- 1.7 As soon as the Parliamentary election was announced, all overseas electors who had not arranged an absent vote were contacted with information about arranging a proxy or postal vote.
- 1.8 As in 2016, due to the two electoral events there was a significant number of postal vote and proxy vote application activity. Where electors wished to appoint a proxy for both events, separate forms had to be completed for each election, which were processed after the May elections.

## **2.0 Maintenance of the Register**

### Absent Vote Refresh

- 2.1 In January 2017, all absent voters with a personal identifier which was more than five years old were contacted to update their signature. Electors had six weeks to respond to the request, and if no response was received after six weeks, the absent vote for the elector was removed.
- 2.2 505 electors were contacted with a new absent vote application form to obtain updated details. After three weeks, a reminder was sent to electors. 142 electors did not respond to either the initial request or the reminder and the postal vote for these electors was removed accordingly.

### Data Checking

- 2.3 The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) uses Council sources to identify new electors to add to the register. Regular updates from Council Tax are received, which lists the details of properties where the person liable for the Council Tax has changed. This information is cross referenced with the electoral register, and a Household Enquiry Form is sent out, to encourage the new occupants to register and confirm which electors can be removed from the register.

### Electoral Reviews

- 2.4 The ERO reviews entries for electors where there is reason to believe that they are no longer resident at a property on a regular basis. Reasons for reviewing electors include notification of new residents at a property and post being returned from an elector as being undelivered.
- 2.5 Reviews are carried out when the ERO has received notification that an elector is no longer living at a property, but does not have secondary, corroborating information, such as Council Tax data, which is required to remove the elector from the register.
- 2.6 Between 1 December 2016 and 1 September 2017, 691 electors were reviewed and removed from the register

## **3.0 Local Democracy Week**

- 3.1 Promotional work was carried out in Local Democracy Week (LDW), which was held between 9 and 13 October 2017.
- 3.2 Activities carried out as part of LDW included:
  - Assembly for Yr 13 and stand at St John the Baptist School to encourage registration
  - Visit to Woking College to encourage registration
  - Launch of 'If I led the Council...' competition
  - 'Could you be a Councillor?' evening
- 3.3 Around new 60 applications to register to vote were received following the promotional work at St John the Baptist 6<sup>th</sup> form and Woking College.
- 3.4 Unfortunately, despite initial enthusiasm from local schools regarding the 'If I led the Council...' competition, no entries were received by the close of the competition. This will be reviewed for the 2018 Local Democracy Week.

3.5 There were three attendees at the ‘Could you be a Councillor?’ evening. This was the second event held in 2017 (the first event being held in June 2017). Officers are reviewing the event for 2018 with a view to maximising attendance numbers.

#### 4.0 Annual Canvass – Email Pilot

4.1 Woking was selected to work with the Cabinet Office to trial new methods for conducting the annual canvass. The aims of the pilots were to improve the efficiency, as well as the efficacy, of the canvass process. Of the different options available, Woking opted to pilot using emails to existing electors to confirm their registration details.

##### Email Pilot

4.2 The annual canvass started on 7 August 2017. The 43,073 properties on the electoral register were split up at random into the following groups:

Treatment	Control	Treatment 1	Outside Pilot
25%	25%	50%	Nursing Homes

4.3 The split of properties was done on a ward basis, to get a representative split across the Borough. Nursing Homes were canvassed separately to the whole pilot process.

4.4 The Control group received the normal canvass forms as in previous years, i.e. an A3 size Household Enquiry Form (HEF), followed by a reminder and then a personal visit, to provide the benchmark for assessing the new processes.

4.5 Properties in the treatment group were contacted, where possible by email, and then follow up contact was made with a revised HEF. Non responding properties were also visited by canvassers. Treatment 1 refers to properties that were formally not included in the pilot, but followed the same procedures for the canvass as the Treatment Group. The ERO was keen to test the email method with as many electors as possible, therefore it was agreed that the rest of the Borough, outside of the official pilot properties, would follow the pilot scheme.

4.6 For the purposes of assessing the pilot, only returns data from the control and treatment group was used.

4.7 Within the Treatment Group (and Treatment 1 Group), the properties were allocated to one of two groups – those properties where an elector has registered an email, and those properties where no email address was recorded. Properties with pending delete electors or under 18s with email addresses were not included in the email group.

4.8 The overall allocation of properties is set out below:

Pilot Group	Description	Number of properties
Treatment - Paper	Properties part of the official pilot (no email)	3,795
Treatment – Email	Properties part of the official pilot (email)	6,901
Treatment 1 - Paper	Properties not part of the official pilot, but receiving the pilot canvass (no email)	13,958
Treatment 1 – Email	Properties not part of the official pilot, but receiving the pilot canvass (email)	7,416
Control	Follow the normal canvass process	10,964
Nursing Homes	Canvassed separately	39

#### Pilot Scheme –Email workflow

- 4.9 Where electors at a property had registered an email address, these electors were sent an email on 7 August 2017. 11,148 emails were sent at this first stage. The emails were sent out from the 'elections@woking.gov.uk' by ERS, the same company which hosts the automated response system. The email directed electors to the online system to confirm/amend details for the property. If the elector had moved, a link to an online form was included to remove the electors from the register at that address.
- 4.10 A reminder email was sent on 21 August where no response had been received. 7,903 emails were sent at this stage.
- 4.11 A revised A4 HEF was sent to all non-responding properties in September 2017, and a personal visit with a further reminder was made in October 2017.

#### Pilot Scheme – No email workflow

- 4.12 Where no emails were registered for electors at a property, these properties received a letter, directing the occupants to the online system to check the details for the property. The details of the electors were not pre-printed.
- 4.13 Where no response was received to the initial letter, a revised A4 HEF was sent in September 2017, and a personal visit with a further reminder was made in October 2017.

#### Personal Canvass

- 4.14 27 canvassers carried out the personal visit stage of the canvass, visiting all properties that had not responded to the previous correspondence (either by email or by post). In total, 14,309 properties were included in this stage (33.2%), which was a slight reduction from the 2016 personal canvass (14,586 properties).

#### Canvass Results

- 4.15 This was the third canvass that electors were able to confirm or update their details via the internet, or confirm their details by telephone or by text (SMS) message. ERS, the host for the automated registration system, advised that they had allocated incorrect security codes to a small number of properties in the initial stage of the canvass. As a result, electors were not able to log in and update their details. Where electors advised us of this issue, we were able to make the necessary changes over the phone or by email. Approximately 40 queries were reported as a result of this problem. This issue was updated for the first reminder stage, and no further problems were reported.
- 4.16 In total, 22,634 properties used the automated services. This equates to 52.9% of all the canvass responses. This continues the trend of the number of electors using the automated services increasing. A full breakdown of the responses is set out below.

	<b>2015</b>		<b>2016</b>		<b>2017</b>	
<b>Remote Service Use</b>	37.4%		46.2%		52.9%	
<b>Response Format</b>	<b>No of Properties</b>	<b>% of all responses</b>	<b>No of Properties</b>	<b>% of all responses</b>	<b>No of Properties</b>	<b>% of all responses</b>
<b>Online</b>	10,088	27.5	12,036	30.9	19,102	48.5
<b>Telephone</b>	1,241	3.4	3,144	8.1	1,551	3.9
<b>SMS</b>	2,002	5.5	2,406	6.2	1,981	5.0

- 4.17 The returned postal canvass forms were also sorted, to identify those forms where no changes to the details had been made. Of the responses received, 81% did not change the details for the property.
- 4.18 Additional data matching exercises were carried out during the canvass. Council sources were used to identify empty properties and also to verify occupancy at a property, which enabled historic entries on the register to be removed.

#### Pilot Review

- 4.19 Initial analysis of the response rates by the pilot group indicates that there was a lower response rate in the email treatment group. However, it appears that the overall number of additions and deletion was not affected by the delivery method being by email.
- 4.20 It also appears that there was a significant difference in the number of online responses for those receiving the email HEF/alternative HEF, rather than those properties receiving the usual A3 HEF. Although part of this could be explained by the self selecting nature of people who provide their email address being more likely to use such a response method, encouraging more people to use the online responses is more efficient and cost effective for the Council.
- 4.21 The costs of sending the emails, including the email set up costs, was also significantly lower than the traditional printed option.
- 4.22 The Cabinet Office is in the process of reviewing the outcome of the pilots, and will be making recommendations in due course.

#### Overall Canvass Response

- 4.23 The overall response rate for the canvass was 92.01%. This was just under a 1% increase on the 2016 canvass response rate.

	<b>Forms Received</b>	<b>% Received</b>
<b>A1 - West Byfleet</b>	1,519	93.2
<b>A2 – Byfleet</b>	3,010	90.0
<b>B1 - Town Centre</b>	627	86.5
<b>B2 - Town Centre North</b>	282	87.3
<b>B3 - Walton Road</b>	667	82.1
<b>B4 – Sheerwater</b>	1,370	91.9
<b>B5 - Board School Road</b>	606	87.7
<b>B6 – Woodham</b>	492	94.1
<b>C1 - Goldsworth West</b>	1,942	91.4
<b>C2 - Goldsworth Central</b>	759	92.9
<b>C3 - Goldsworth East</b>	1,170	91.8
<b>D1 – Brookwood</b>	585	95.4
<b>D2 - Brookwood South</b>	201	93.9
<b>D3 – Mayford</b>	730	93.7
<b>D4 - Hook Heath</b>	1,077	95.9
<b>D5 – Barnsbury</b>	702	92.1
<b>D6 - Sutton Green</b>	160	94.7
<b>E1 – Westfield</b>	1,312	93.6

<b>E2 – Kingfield</b>	1,095	93.7
<b>E3 - Shackleford Road</b>	61	92.4
<b>E4 - Old Woking</b>	1,247	92.0
<b>E5 - Gresham Park</b>	42	87.5
<b>F1 - Horsell West</b>	2,008	95.6
<b>F2 - Horsell South</b>	495	95.7
<b>F3 - Horsell East</b>	1,023	96.2
<b>G1 - Knaphill West</b>	2,356	90.1
<b>G2 - Knaphill South</b>	186	96.9
<b>G3 - Knaphill East</b>	1,521	91.5
<b>G4 - Knaphill North</b>	15	100.0
<b>H1 - Mount Hermon West</b>	2,680	87.6
<b>H2 - Mount Hermon East</b>	1,837	89.4
<b>J1 – Maybury</b>	746	91.4
<b>J2 - Maybury South</b>	97	95.1
<b>J3 – Pyrford</b>	1,964	95.9
<b>J4 - Pyrford North</b>	834	94.6
<b>K1 - St John`s West</b>	1,846	94.4
<b>K2 - St John`s Central</b>	1,095	95.5
<b>K3 - St John`s East</b>	1,025	91.4

4.24 The following information is given as a comparison of the register as at 1 September 2017, (the last publication of the rolling registration updates before the canvass) and the register as published on 1 December 2017. This year, data on the number of 18 year olds on the register has been included.

4.25 Electors who turn 18 in the course of the year (1 December 2016 – 30 November 2017) are included in the attainer figures. Also included in the attainer figures are 16 year olds, who will turn 17 in the same period.

<b>Register</b>	<b>1 September 2017</b>	<b>1 December 2017</b>
<b>No. of Electors</b>	76,291	74,397
<b>Attainers (16 and 17 year olds)</b>	1,003 (of whom 665 were turning 17 before 30 November 2017)	940 (of whom 291 are turning 17 before 30 November 2018)
<b>18 year olds</b>	917	852
<b>Over 76s</b>	6,685	6,564
<b>Postal Voters</b>	14,145	13,851
<b>Opt-Out of Edited Register</b>	50,834	49,887



# Surrey County Council Elections

## 4 May 2017

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Surrey County Council elections were co-ordinated by David McNulty, Chief Executive at Surrey County Council (SCC).
- 1.2 The Deputy Returning Officer (Woking's Returning Officer) was responsible for the administration of other areas of the election in Woking.
- 1.3 The relationship between the RO and SCC democratic services team was very good, and there was good communication from both sides to ensure information was shared promptly.

### 2.0 Media Strategy and Public Engagement

- 2.1 The media strategy for the elections was to publicise the key dates for the election, and to identify and enable additional electors to register to vote in time for the elections in May 2017.

#### Household Notification Letter

- 2.2 As set out earlier in the report, in preparation for the elections, all households in Woking were sent a Household Notification Letter (HNL) on 6 February 2017. The HNL included details of all people on the electoral register at the property when it was published on 1 December 2017.
- 2.3 Electors were directed to the national online voter registration website if they were not registered and as set out previously, there was a positive response to the HNL write out.

#### Elections Leaflet

- 2.4 The annual elections leaflet was sent out with the HNL. The leaflet included information on:
  - the role of Surrey County Council;
  - who was eligible to vote in each election;
  - how electors cast their vote in the different elections and how the successful candidates would be elected;
  - what constituted an electoral offence and how to report such offences;
  - details of the postal vote process, including the deadline to register to vote by post; and;
  - how to receive a translation of the leaflet
- 2.5 Press releases were issued at key points in the election timetable and an article was included in the Spring edition of the Woking Magazine. Posters were displayed in at the Civic Offices and adverts publicising the elections appeared in the local press.

### 3.0 Election Staff and Training

- 3.1 Five additional DROS were appointed whose main roles were to adjudicate on returned postal vote statements, inspect polling stations and oversee individual count teams.

Additionally, the Electoral Services Manager was appointed a DRO specifically for the nomination process and the Democratic Services Manager was appointed a DRO for the postal vote opening process.

- 3.2 The elections were managed by the Electoral Services Manager (ESM), with support from two Electoral Services Officers and the Electoral Services Assistant.
- 3.3 The issue and opening of postal votes was managed by the Democratic Services Manager, supported by the Democratic Services team.
- 3.4 Staffing levels at each polling station were in accordance with the Electoral Commission's guidance. As a general rule, a minimum of 3 members of staff is maintained at each station, comprising one Presiding Officer and two poll clerks. Where necessary, the number of poll clerks is increased to three (or reduced to one), depending on the allocated electorate.
- 3.5 Staff were notified that, when accepting an offer of employment to work in a polling station they were consenting to work during the hours of poll without a rest break and in excess of the maximum working hours provided by the Working Time Directive.
- 3.6 This year, online training was introduced to all polling station staff. In addition to the online training, all Presiding Officers attended an additional briefing prior to the collection of the ballot boxes, to emphasise any special requirements for polling day.
- 3.7 All polling station staff were provided with an Electoral Commission handbook and quick reference guide for the election, to use as a reference guide on polling day. They were also provided with a list of the candidates standing in the election. They were asked to advise whether they were related to any of the candidates, so that they could be allocated an alternative polling station in a different ward if necessary. No such relationships were reported.
- 3.8 Count supervisors attended a briefing session on Monday, 24 April 2017. The ESM and DRO explained verification and count procedures to be followed.

#### **4.0 Nominations and Candidates**

##### Candidates and Agents' Briefing

- 4.1 The Briefing for Candidates and Agents was given by the Returning Officer and the Electoral Services Manager on Wednesday, 8 March 2017. A representative for the Borough Inspector also attended the briefing. The presentation outlined:
  - the election timetable
  - the nomination process
  - the conduct expected of candidates and supporters, including the Memorandum of Understanding
  - electoral offences
  - electoral expenses
- 4.2 All candidates, agents and campaigners were invited to the briefing.

##### Nominations

- 4.3 The deadline for nominations for the County elections was 4pm on Thursday, 4 April 2017. All nominations were received before the 4pm deadline, and all were deemed to be valid

nominations. Schedule 1 sets out the details of the candidates and parties standing for election.

#### Local Campaign Protocol

- 4.4 A local protocol relating to campaign materials and publicity was circulated to all candidates as part of the nomination pack. Whilst not mandatory, candidates were encouraged to sign the protocol, which would indicate that candidates were aware of the requirements relating to campaign publicity. Of the 29 candidates, 12 candidates returned signed protocols.

#### Candidates' Expenses

- 4.5 The deadline for the return of candidates' expenses was Friday, 6 June 2017. The expenses returns were filed with the Deputy Returning Officer and stored at the Civic Offices.

### **5.0 Poll Cards**

- 5.1 Poll cards were issued to all electors in Woking on 23 March 2017, in order to give sufficient time for electors to change their voting arrangements if they so wished. Maps of the polling places were printed on the cards, as in previous years, to assist electors who were unfamiliar with their designated polling place. No problems were reported regarding the issue of poll cards.
- 5.2 Electors were able to also search for their polling stations on the Council's website, using the 'Your Local Council' service.

### **6.0 Postal Votes**

#### Issue of Postal Vote Packs

- 6.1 Following the success of the early issue of postal votes in 2016, the postal votes were issued on 12 April 2017. Additional sets of postal votes were issued on 19 and 26 April 2017. These were for electors who registered to vote on 13 April (registration deadline) and those who applied for a postal vote on 18 April (postal vote deadline).
- 6.2 Where any postal votes were cancelled by the 18 April, these postal ballot packs were removed and destroyed.

6.3 The table below sets out the number of postal votes issued for each ward.

<b>Division</b>	<b>Total</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	2,101
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,876
The Byfleets	1,760
Woking North	1,971
Woking South	1,991
Woking South East	1,904
Woking South West	1,736
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,339</b>

6.4 In total, 42 replacement ballot paper packs were issued, in cases where the elector advised that they had spoilt their ballot papers, lost their postal ballot papers, or had not received them. In such circumstances, the original postal vote ballot paper was cancelled and new postal vote pack issued.

#### Opening of Postal Votes

6.5 Opening sessions started on Monday, 24 April 2017. The opening sessions were held in the Kemp Room at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre, managed by the Democratic Services team. As in previous years, the DROs adjudicated the postal vote scanning. Agents were advised in advance of the dates of the opening sessions.

6.6 In total 11 opening sessions were held. A full breakdown of the opening sessions is set out at Schedule 2. The final opening session was held from 5.00 pm on the evening of the election. The evening session dealt with those postal votes received in the post on the day of the election, those handed in at either the Civic Offices or polling stations and those returned by the Post Office through the final sweep.

6.7 Two collections of postal votes from polling stations were arranged during the election day to minimise the number of postal votes to be opened after the close of polls. The post box at the Civic Offices was checked at 10.00 pm and a final 'sweep' was undertaken by the Royal Mail at their delivery office, which resulted in a further 68 postal votes being received.

6.8 The total number of postal votes received on polling day 1,026. These postal votes were processed and verified by 12.30am.

### Postal Votes – Returns Analysis

6.9 Set out below is a summary of the returned postal vote envelopes returned. The overall return rate for the Borough was 71.4%.

<b>Division</b>	<b>Total</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	1,552
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,336
The Byfleets	1,243
Woking North	1,406
Woking South	1,423
Woking South East	1,353
Woking South West	1,213
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,526</b>

### Initial Verification of Returns

6.10 Postal votes are opened and the contents checked prior to the checking of the postal vote statement. At this stage, a postal vote can be rejected for the following reasons:

- Ballot Papers Numbers do not match – ballot papers cannot be accepted where the number on the ballot paper envelope does not match the number on the postal vote statement.
- Postal Vote Statement was absent.

6.11 The number of statements rejected at this stage was:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Total Envelopes Received</b>	<b>Total Statements Rejected/Absent</b>	<b>Total Sent to Scanner</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	1,552	36	1,516
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,336	27	1,309
The Byfleets	1,243	23	1,220
Woking North	1,406	43	1,363
Woking South	1,423	29	1,394
Woking South East	1,353	30	1,323
Woking South West	1,213	26	1,187
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,526</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>9,312</b>

### Verification of Postal Vote Statements

6.12 After the initial checks, postal vote statements are verified, to ensure the signature and date of birth provided on the statement matches those on the original postal vote application.

6.13 The reasons for rejecting a postal vote at this stage are:

- Date of Birth Rejected – either the date of birth has not been entered on the postal vote statement, or it does not match the date of birth provided on the postal vote application.
- Signature Rejected – either the signature has not been entered on the postal vote statement, or it does not match the signature provided on the postal vote application.
- Signature and Date of Birth Rejected - either the voter did not complete the postal vote statement or both the signature and date of birth provided on the postal vote statement did not match the signature and date of birth provided on the postal vote application.

6.14 The table below sets out the rejection rates at the scanner for the postal vote statements:

Division	Valid	Rejected		Rejected		
		No.	%	DOB & Sig	DOB	Sig
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	1,498	18	1.19	4	5	9
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,290	19	1.45	3	3	13
The Byfleets	1,201	19	1.56	2	3	14
Woking North	1,339	24	1.76	3	6	15
Woking South	1,367	27	1.94	6	4	17
Woking South East	1,313	10	0.76	1	2	7
Woking South West	1,169	18	1.52	3	2	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,177</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>88</b>

6.15 The overall rejection rate for postal votes was 1.44%.

6.16 Following the scanning of the postal vote statements, the contents of the ballot paper envelope are checked. A postal vote can be rejected at this stage for the following reasons:

- Ballot Papers Numbers do not match – ballot papers cannot be accepted where the number on the ballot paper does not match the number on the ballot paper envelope.
- Ballot Papers were absent

6.17 The number of postal votes rejected at this stage is set out below:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Total accepted at the scanner</b>	<b>Rejected at post scanning stage</b>	<b>Total Postal votes accepted</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	1,498	2	1,500
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,290	1	1,291
The Byfleets	1,201	2	1,203
Woking North	1,339	2	1,341
Woking South	1,367	1	1,367
Woking South East	1,313	4	1,317
Woking South West	1,169	1	1,170
<b>County Total</b>	<b>9,176</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9,189</b>

6.18 The overall rejection rates are set out below:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Postal Votes Accepted</b>	<b>Ballot Papers Rejected</b>	<b>% of Ballot Papers rejected</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	1,500	56	3.60
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	1,291	47	3.51
The Byfleets	1,203	44	3.53
Woking North	1,341	69	4.89
Woking South	1,367	57	4.00
Woking South East	1,317	44	3.23
Woking South West	1,170	45	3.70
<b>Surrey Total</b>	<b>9,189</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>3.79</b>

6.19 Any errors relating to personal identifiers were recorded at the scanners. Where electors needed to update their identifier, they were contacted following the election. Any clerical errors were also corrected.

## 7.0 Polling Stations

7.1 50 polling stations were used for the elections in 29 venues. Seven additional polling stations were set up in wards where the county electoral division was not co-terminous with the ward boundary.

7.2 The electorate in these additional polling stations ranged from 31 electors to 441. These stations were staffed by two additional poll clerks, and overseen by a Chief Presiding Officer.

7.3 Presiding Officers were asked to record information throughout polling day in a log book. This included possible errors on the register, visits from Police Officers and cases where

electors were marked as an absent voter and claimed not to have asked for a postal vote. This information has been analysed and, where appropriate, electors have been contacted.

#### Al-Asr Education and Community Centre

- 7.4 Issues with parking at the Al-Asr were reported by the polling station staff. Officers are looking at how temporary parking in the vicinity of the polling station for voting can be advertised.
- 7.5 Issues with the layout of the polling station have also been raised. Officers will visit the location to assess how the layout can be improved.

#### Knaphill Scouts Headquarters

- 7.6 Issues were reported at the Knaphill Scouts Headquarters regarding the narrow access road to the site, which was congested at busy periods during the day. Officers are aware of the issues at this site and will be investigating how this can be improved.

#### TS Dianthus

- 7.7 Officers are assessing options to install an assisted opening mechanism to the main door of the building.

### **8.0 Verification and Count**

- 8.1 All polling station documentation and ballot boxes were returned to HG Wells on Thursday, 4 May following the close of polls. These were stored in the Wells Room overnight with additional security guard presence.
- 8.2 The verification and count was held on Friday, 5 May 2017 at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre from 9.30am.
- 8.3 There were five count teams consisting of a count supervisor, an assistant count supervisor and twenty count assistants. Three Count teams were located in the Wells Room and two teams were located in the Kemp Room.
- 8.4 There was a break between 12.30pm and 1.30pm and the count was completed by 3pm.
- 8.5 During the count, security staff were in place at the entrances to the Wells Room and the Kemp Room. CCTV cameras were installed at HG Wells which covered the document sorting area, the counting areas and the entrances to the rooms.
- 8.6 Colour coded badges were issued to attendees, to differentiate between levels of security access for all those in attendance. The Candidates and their agents, together with a guest, were invited to attend the Count and all Borough Councillors were invited to attend as guests of the RO.
- 8.7 'Elect IT' was used for the first time to manage the count invites and count badges. This was used to send out count invites and badges. No issues were reported with the delivery of the badges and where additional badges were required, generated at the Count.
- 8.8 A live television feed to the Griffin Bar from the Count Hall was provided to accommodate any individuals not included on the invitation lists. BBC news coverage was also provided in the Griffin Bar.



### Storage of Documents

- 8.9 All documents returned from polling stations and counted ballot papers were sorted into crates in the Wells Room and these were sealed and removed to a secure store on Friday, 5 May.

### Media Coverage

- 8.10 Representatives of the local press attended the count. The Marketing Communications Manager co-ordinated the press activities before and during the count, to ensure that there was a smooth supply of information. The results were made available on the website straightaway.

### Turnout

- 8.11 The average turnout for the County elections was 37.8%

## **9.0 Electoral Integrity**

- 9.1 The Deputy Returning Officer reviewed the provision of a permanent police presence at the polling stations at Maybury and Sheerwater. Given that no allegations of fraudulent behaviour had been reported at these stations at recent elections, the DRO decided not to employ additional police officers in these areas on the basis that any problems would be reported immediately and that this could be reinstated at future elections, if required.
- 9.2 No allegations of electoral fraud were reported to the DRO for the county elections.

# UK Parliamentary Election

## 5 June 2017

### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The UK Parliamentary Election was announced on Tuesday, 18 April 2017. As the announcement was made only two weeks before the County elections, initial efforts focussed on arranging nominations, poll cards and postal vote stationery. This enabled officers to focus on the final preparations for the County elections, before the Notice of Election for the Parliamentary election was published.
- 1.2 Given the timing of the announcement, there were no resources for additional registration promotional activities, however additional forms were sent to known 'pending electors' to encourage them to register to vote.

### 2.0 Woking County Constituency

- 2.1 The Woking County Constituency consists of all wards of Woking Borough and two wards (Normandy and Pirbright) of Guildford Borough.
- 2.2 The Returning Officer for Parliamentary elections in Surrey is the High Sheriff of Surrey. The Acting Returning Officer, the Chief Executive, was responsible for management of the election in Woking.
- 2.3 With the agreement of the ARO, the elections team for Guildford Borough Council arranged the issue of poll cards to electors in Normandy and Pirbright, and also booked the polling stations and arranged for the delivery of equipment to these polling stations.

### 3.0 Staff and Training

- 3.1 The ARO appointed five Deputies (DROs). Their main roles were to adjudicate on returned postal vote statements, inspect polling stations and oversee individual count teams. The Electoral Services Manager (ESM) was appointed as a DRO for the nomination process, and the Democratic Services Manager was appointed as a DRO specifically to adjudicate on Postal Vote Statements.
- 3.2 The election was managed by the ESM with support from two Electoral Services Officers and the Electoral Services Assistant. To assist with the additional administration of the registrations and postal vote applications, an additional temporary member of staff was employed.
- 3.3 The issue and opening of postal votes was managed by the Democratic Services Manager, supported by the Democratic Services team.
- 3.4 Staffing levels at each polling station were in accordance with the Electoral Commission's guidance. As a rule, a minimum of three staff is maintained at each station, comprising one Presiding Officer and two poll clerks. Where necessary, the number of poll clerks is increased to three (or reduced to one), depending on the allocated electorate.
- 3.5 Staff were notified that, when accepting an offer of employment to work in a polling station they were consenting to work during the hours of poll without a rest break and in excess of the maximum working hours provided by the Working Time Directive.

- 3.6 Given the proximity to the training held for the May elections, the decision was taken to train all staff together, to focus on the key changes for the parliamentary election. All Presiding Officers were required to attend the training.
- 3.7 All polling station staff was provided with an Electoral Commission handbook and quick reference guide for the election, to use as a reference guide on polling day.

#### **4.0 Poll Cards**

- 4.1 Following the receipt of the Writ, poll cards were issued to all electors in Woking on 8 May 2017 following the publication of the Notice of Election. Additional issues of poll cards were dispatched on 1 June 2017 for electors who registered before and on the registration deadline.
- 4.2 The ESM was notified on 9 May that there had been a printing error on a batch of proxy poll cards that were issued on 8 May. The printers re-printed the poll cards and sent the revised card with an accompanying letter the same day.
- 4.3 The final run of poll cards was issued on Friday, 2 June 2017. All eligible electors for the election were sent poll cards, setting out their voting arrangements. Unfortunately, there was an error with the Electoral Management System, which resulted in a small number of electors, who had registered to vote on the last day for registrations, receiving an automatically produced confirmation of their registration letter, which also advised that they would not be able to vote. 10 queries were received regarding this issue. In all cases the electors had received a poll card before the confirmation letter arriving, and queried why the letter had been sent.
- 4.4 Discussions have been held with the software suppliers to ensure that this error is not repeated in the future and office procedures for producing these letters have been revised.

#### **5.0 Postal Votes**

##### Issue of Postal Vote Packs

- 5.1 The first issue of postal votes for overseas electors was dispatched on 17 May 2017. The main issue of postal votes to UK electors was dispatched on Friday, 19 May 2017. This was before the deadline to amend or cancel postal vote arrangements. If an elector advised that they no longer wanted their postal vote, after the dispatch, these absent votes were cancelled, so that they could not be fraudulently used.
- 5.2 International pre-paid return envelopes were provided for all overseas postal votes. Whilst some electors did attach additional postage to the envelopes, 70% of the ballot papers issued to overseas electors were returned.
- 5.3 In total 16,011 postal votes were issued.. 99 replacement ballot paper packs were issued, in cases where the elector advised that they had spoilt their ballot papers, lost their postal ballot papers, or had not received them. In such circumstances, the original postal vote ballot paper was cancelled and new postal vote pack issued.

##### Normandy and Pirbright

- 5.4 1,276 postal votes were issued to electors in Normandy and Pirbright. On Monday, 22 May, a printing error on some of the postal vote statements issued on Friday, 19 May was reported. The statements had not included a box for the elector's signature.

5.5 All affected electors were contacted with a revised statement, and all returned postal votes were monitored to ensure electors returned the correct statement. No postal votes were rejected as a result of this error (although 11 Guildford postal votes were rejected at other stages of the postal vote opening process).

Opening of Postal Votes

5.6 Opening sessions started on Thursday, 1 June 2017. The opening sessions were held in the Ogilvy Room at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre and was managed by the Democratic Services team. As in previous years, the DROs adjudicated the postal vote scanning. Agents were advised in advance of the dates of the opening sessions.

5.7 11 opening sessions were held. A full breakdown of the opening sessions is set out at Schedule 2. The final opening session was held from 5.00pm on the evening of the election. The evening session dealt with those postal votes received in the post on the day of the election, those handed in at either the Civic Offices or polling stations and those returned by the Post Office through the final sweep.

5.8 Two collections of postal votes from polling stations were arranged during the election day to minimise the number of postal votes to be opened after the close of polls. The post box at the Civic Offices was checked at 10.00 pm and a final ‘sweep’ was undertaken by the Royal Mail at their delivery office. In total, 1,375 postal votes were received on polling day. These postal votes were processed and verified by 12.30am.

Postal Votes – Returns Analysis

5.9 Set out below is a summary of the returned postal vote envelopes returned. The overall return rate for the Constituency was 88%.

Area	Total Issued	Total Return	% Return
Woking	16,011	14,087	88%

Initial Verification of Returns

5.10 As previously advised, postal votes are opened and the contents checked prior to the checking of the postal vote statement. At this stage, a postal vote can be rejected for the following reasons:

- Ballot Paper Number does not match – ballot papers cannot be accepted where the number on the ballot paper envelope does not match the number in the postal vote statement.
- Postal Vote Statement was absent.

5.11 The number of statements rejected at this stage was:

Area	Total Envelopes Received	Total Statements Rejected/Absent	Total Sent to Scanner
Woking	14,087	161	13,926

### Verification of Postal Vote Statements

5.12 After the initial checks, postal vote statements are verified, to ensure the signature and date of birth provided on the statement matches than on the original postal vote application.

5.13 The table below sets out the rejection rates of the postal vote statements through the scanning process. It is important to note that the figures relate to the scanning process alone and do not include other reasons for rejection.

5.14 The reasons for rejecting a postal vote at this stage are:

- Date of Birth Rejected – either the date of birth has not been entered on the postal vote statement, or it does not match the date of birth provided on the postal vote application.
- Signature Rejected – either the signature has not been entered on the postal vote statement, or it does not match the signature provided on the postal vote application.
- Signature and Date of Birth Rejected - either the voter did not complete the postal vote statement or both the signature and date of birth provided on the postal vote statement did not match the signature and date of birth provided on the postal vote application.

5.15 The table below sets out the rejection rates at the scanner for the postal vote statements:

Area	Valid	Rejected		Rejected		
		No.	%	DOB & Sig	DOB	Sig
Woking	13,777	149	1.08	19	45	85

### Post – Scanner Rejections

5.16 Following the scanning of the postal vote statements, the contents of the ballot paper envelope are checked. A postal vote can be rejected at this stage for the following reasons:

- Ballot Paper Numbers do not match – ballot papers cannot be accepted where the number on the ballot paper does not match the number on the ballot paper envelope.
- Ballot Papers were absent

5.17 The number of postal votes rejected at this stage is set out below:

Area	Total accepted at the scanner	Rejected at post scanning stage	Total Postal votes accepted
Woking	13,777	48	13,729

5.18 The overall rejection rates are set out below:

Area	Postal Votes Accepted	Ballot Papers Rejected	% of Ballot Papers rejected
Woking	13,729	358	2.6%

- 5.19 Any errors relating to personal identifiers were recorded at the scanners. Where electors needed to update their identifier, they were contacted following the election. Any clerical errors were also corrected.
- 5.20 All electors whose postal votes were rejected at the County election were contacted in the week after the election, to ensure electors had as much time as possible to update their postal vote records before the Parliamentary election. Unfortunately, nine electors were also rejected at the Parliamentary election.

## **6.0 Polling Stations**

- 6.1 45 stations were used for the election. The ARO and his deputies were allocated polling stations which were visited throughout the day.
- 6.2 Representatives from Surrey Police (either a PC or PCSO) visited all polling stations throughout the day.
- 6.3 Queues were reported at several polling stations, but no queues were reported at 10pm when the polls closed.

### Knaphill Scouts HQ

- 6.4 Congestion was reported at the Knaphill Scouts HQ again. As reported, this is being investigated by officers.

### Oaktree Infant School

- 6.5 Representations have been received regarding the use of the school as a polling station. Alternative venues will be investigated, as well as the option of having a Council owned temporary mobile facility.

### Parkview Centre for the Community

- 6.6 There was a minor incident outside the centre, which was investigated by Surrey Police, but no action was required.

## **7.0 Verification and Count**

- 7.1 The verification and count was held immediately after the close of polls on 8 June 2017 at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre.
- 7.2 There were four verification teams; three of which were located in the Wells Room and the fourth was located in the Kemp Room. Following the completion of the verification and the opening of the returned postal votes, a fifth team was set up in the Kemp Room, staffed by the postal vote opening team. As a result the ballot papers were counted in five count teams.
- 7.3 All count teams consisted of a count supervisor, an assistant count supervisor and twenty count assistants. All count staff were allocated to a count team prior to the count starting.
- 7.4 CCTV cameras were installed at HG Wells which covered the document sorting area, the counting areas and the entrances to the rooms.
- 7.5 Colour coded badges were issued to attendees, to differentiate between levels of security access for all those in attendance. All agents and their counting agents were invited to attend the count. All Borough Councillors were also invited to attend.

- 7.6 'ElectIT' was used for the second time to issue the count invites and count attendee badges. Although there was an issue with the onsite printer at the count, this did not affect the access to the count.
- 7.7 A live television feed to the Griffin Bar from the Count Hall was provided to accommodate any individuals not included on the invitation lists. BBC coverage of the election was also provided in the Griffin Bar.
- 7.8 One count assistant became ill during the course of the count. First aid was administered on site, and an ambulance was called. The count assistant was accompanied home by a family member once she had recovered.
- 7.9 The verification was completed by 1.20pm and the result was announced at 2.55am.

#### Storage of Documents

- 7.10 All documents returned from polling stations were sorted into crates in the Wells Room and these were sealed and secured in the Wells Room overnight, with additional security guard presence. All documents and ballot papers were removed to the secure store on Friday, 9 June 2017.

#### Media Coverage

- 7.11 The Marketing Communications Manager co-ordinated the press activities before and during the count to ensure that there was a smooth supply of information about the election. The local results were made available on the website straightaway.

#### Turnout

- 7.12 The turnout for the election was 72.7%.

### **8.0 Allegations of Electoral Fraud**

- 8.1 One allegation of electoral fraud on the part of the Acting Returning Officer (ARO) was referred to Surrey Police, relating to the publication of pictures of rejected ballot papers at the count. As of 4 October 2017, the ARO has been interviewed regarding the incident but no further information is available from Surrey Police.
- 8.2 On complaint was received regarding a poster at the Conservative Party Office on Chobham Road. The ARO was satisfied that the poster was acceptable and no further was required.

# West Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

## 5 October 2017

### 1.0 Overview

- 1.1 A referendum on the West Byfleet Neighbourhood Plan was held on Thursday, 5 October 2017. The referendum was held across the West Byfleet Neighbourhood Area, which consisted of all electors in the West Byfleet (A1) polling district and some electors in the Pyrford North (J4) polling district. In total the electorate for the referendum was 4,054.
- 1.2 The Counting Officer published an Information Statement regarding the referendum on 25 August 2017. Local residents were able to access this information at the Civic Offices, Woking Library, West Byfleet Library and on the Council's website.

### 2.0 Poll Cards

- 2.1 The poll cards were issued on 1 September 2017. No problems were reported with the poll card issue.

### 3.0 Postal Votes

- 3.1 864 postal votes were issued on 23 September 2017. Two opening sessions were held on Wednesday, 4 October at the Civic Offices and on Thursday, 5 October at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre.
- 3.2 A summary of the returned postal vote envelopes is set out below:

Area	Envelopes returned	Statements rejected at pre-scanning stage	Statements rejected at scanning stage	Ballot Papers rejected after the scanning stage	Total Ballot Papers included at the Count
West Byfleet Neighbourhood Area	454	9	8	0	437

- 3.3 Overall, eight postal vote statements were rejected, which equated to a 1.80% rejection rate. The table below sets out the details.

	Valid	Total Rejected	Rejected			% Rejected
			DOB and Sig	DOB	Sig	
West Byfleet Neighbourhood Area	437	8	1	0	7	1.80

### 4.0 Polling Stations

- 4.1 Six people were employed to work in the polling stations. Staff attended a briefing session on Monday, 2 October 2017, which detailed the key issues for the referendum.
- 4.2 The St John's Cornerstone Centre was used as the polling place for the referendum.



4.3 Electors were allocated to one of two polling stations at the Centre. A Deputy Returning Officer visited these polling stations on polling day, collecting any postal votes which had been handed in.

## **5.0 Verification and Count**

5.1 The count was held following the close of polls in the Kemp Room at the HG Wells Conference and Events Centre.

5.2 35 people were employed to work at the count. There were two count teams, each composed of one count supervisor, one count assistant supervisor and 12 count assistants.

5.3 The postal votes handed in at the count by Presiding Officers. Following the completion of the postal vote opening session, the verified ballot papers were transferred to the Kemp Room for inclusion in the count.

## **6.0 Turnout**

6.1 The overall turnout for the referendum was 24%. The postal vote response rate was 51%.

# Electoral Integrity Pilots – May 2018

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council agreed at its meeting on 20 July to support an application to participate in the Cabinet Office’s pilots to trial ID in polling stations at the May 2018 elections.
- 1.2 All electors voting in person at a polling station or acting as a proxy for another elector will be required to provide ID before being issued with a ballot paper. If no ID can be presented, the electors will be refused a ballot paper and be unable to vote.
- 1.3 On 28 September, the Council agreed the ID types that would be accepted in the polling stations in May 2018. This has been expanded to include three further types of ID at the request of the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office

## 2.0 ID Requirements

- 2.1 The full list of the agreed ID is set out below:

ID Type	Comments
UK Passport	Need not be current, as long as there is sufficient likeness between the photo and the elector.
EU Passport	
Commonwealth Passport	
UK and Crown Dependency Photo Driving Licence	Includes UK provisional licence
EU Photo Driving Licence	
EEA Photographic Identity Card	Added at the request of the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission
UK Biometric Residence Permit	Added at the request of the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission
Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card	Added at the request of the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission
Surrey Senior Bus Pass	Statutory concessionary pass issued by Surrey County Council  Applicants must provide proof of name, age, address and NI number.
Disabled People’s Bus Pass	Statutory concessionary pass issued by Surrey County Council  Applicants must provide proof of name, age, address, NI number and proof of disability.
Surrey Student Fare Card	Non- statutory concessionary pass issued by Surrey County Council.  Students must provide their date of birth, postal address and their school/college details. The card is then sent to the college where the student collects it.
16-25 Railcard	Photo ID issued by the Association of Train Operating Companies and accepted by Train Companies operating Passenger Railway Services in Great Britain

	Application must be this must be accompanied by proof of age (e.g. passport. Driving licence, national ID card or birth certificate)
Rail Season Ticket Photocard	
Local Electoral Card	To be issued by the Returning Officer.

2.2 Any elector who does not have the necessary ID will be able to apply for the local electoral card. Electors will need to complete an application form, which sets out what supporting evidence will be required, prior to being issued with the electoral card.

2.3 Electors will be able to submit applications for an electoral card in person, by post or by email, as long as all the necessary documentation and attested photo has been provided.

### **3.0 Publicity**

3.1 Working with the Cabinet Office, a comprehensive communications plan is being developed, which, in conjunction with an Equalities Impact Assessment, will ensure that the scheme is effectively publicised across the Borough.

REPORT ENDS

## Schedule 1: County Elections Nomination Analysis

The tables below set out the number of candidates fielded by each political party in the Borough elections and a breakdown of number of candidates by Ward.

<b>Party</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>
Conservative Party Candidate	7
Independent	1
Labour Party	7
Liberal Democrats	7
UK Independence Party	7

<b>Ward</b>	<b>No. of Candidates</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	4
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	4
The Byfleets	5
Woking North	4
Woking South	4
Woking South East	4
Woking South West	4

## Schedule 2: Postal Vote Opening Sessions

### SCC Elections

Session	Date	Time
1	Monday, 24 April 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
2	Tuesday, 25 April 2017	9.30 am to 1.00 pm
3	Tuesday, 25 April 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
4	Thursday, 27 April 2017	9.30 am to 1.00 pm
5	Thursday, 27 April 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
6	Friday, 28 April 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00pm
7	Tuesday, 2 May 2017	9.30am to 1.00pm
8	Tuesday, 2 May 2017	1.30pm to 5.00pm
9	Wednesday, 3 May 2017	1.30pm to 8.00pm
10	Thursday, 4 May 2017	1.00pm – 4.30pm
11	Thursday, 4 May 2017	5.00pm to 2.00am

### UK Parliamentary Election

Session	Date	Time
1	Thursday, 1 June 2017	9.30 am to 1.00 pm
2	Thursday, 1 June 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
3	Friday, 2 June 2017	9.30 am to 1.00 pm
4	Friday, 2 June 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
5	Monday, 5 June 2017	9.30 am to 1.00 pm
6	Monday, 5 June 2017	1.30 pm to 5.00 pm
7	Tuesday, 6 June 2017	9.30am to 1.00pm
8	Tuesday, 6 June 2017	1.30pm to 5.00pm
9	Wednesday, 7 June 2017	1.30pm to 8.00pm
10	Thursday, 8 June 2017	1.00pm – 4.30pm
11	Thursday, 8 June 2017	5.00pm to 2.00am

## Schedule 3 –Turnout Analysis

### County Turnout

<b>Division</b>	<b>May 2013 (%)</b>	<b>May 2017 (%)</b>
Goldsworth East and Horsell Village	33	41
Knaphill and Goldsworth West	33	34
The Byfleets	29	37
Woking North	37	41
Woking South	31	38
Woking South East	31	38
Woking South West	29	36

### Parliamentary Election Turnout

<b>Year</b>	<b>Turnout (%)</b>
2017	72.7
2015	70.17
2010	71.68
2005	68.58