

## WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE ELECTIONS AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION REVIEW PANEL

#### HELD ON 5 JULY 2018 IN THE BOARD ROOM - CIVIC OFFICES

Present: Claire Storey, Independent Co-opted Member (Chairman)  
Councillor Simon Ashall  
Councillor Louise Morales  
Councillor Melanie Whitehand

Rosemary McCrum, Liberal Democrat

Peter Bryant  
Charlotte Griffiths  
Ray Morgan

Absent: Councillor Ann-Marie Barker  
Councillor David Bittleston  
Councillor John Bond  
Councillor M Ilyas Raja  
Douglas J Spinks

#### Actions

##### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M I Raja and D Bittleston and Lloyd Woodham (Labour)

##### 2. Voter ID Pilot Review - Draft Council Report

The Members of the Panel considered the report which detailed the work undertaken to develop the Voter ID pilot and the results and experiences from polling day. The Panel's view was sought prior to the report being considered by the Council at its meeting on 26 July 2018.

Charlotte Griffiths provided an overview of the draft report, highlighting what worked well and the improvements that could be made for any future pilot. This included reviewing the list of photographic ID accepted to include, blue badges for disabled drivers and; considering other forms of ID such as citizen cards, military IDs, taxi licences and student cards. In the future, the Officers would also seek to remove the rail season ticket photocard as there were concerns about the lack of checks made on the applicant's identity on application.

Ray noted that he felt the pilot went well and was pleased with the turnout. He also believed it would be a good idea to continue with the Voter ID and create more use for the Local Elector Card (LEC).

Councillor Morales, speaking on behalf of Councillor Barker, felt that the lack of votes from disenfranchised voters could have had an impact on the overall results. However, the Panel noted that there was no

reliable method to measure who normally voted but had not voted in May due to the ID requirements.

It was also queried whether wards with lower average incomes were more adversely affected by the pilot. Councillor Whitehand noted that this was probably not the case, as some areas, such as Sheerwater, generally had higher turnout.

Cllr Morales, expressed concern that there were still groups of electors not having the correct ID. For example women aged between 50-60 who were not in the targeted day centres or women's groups, and who were working full time and as such would not have the opportunity to engage as much as other groups. Ray informed the Panel that he was aware that the engagement at the day centres did not reach out to all groups. Officers were aware that additional work could be done if the pilot were run again. Ray advised that suggestions for targeting specific groups in the community would be welcomed. These would be taken into consideration ahead of the next election if the pilots were run in 2019 and if the Council agreed to participate.

### Local Elector Card

Cllr Morales raised several concerns about the Local Elector Card (LEC). From the feedback she had received, some electors struggled with the correct documents that were required for the LEC. She also voiced concern for those in temporary accommodation and in low income groups, who may not be able to afford a passport, a driving licence or the price of a photo for the LEC. Whilst it was noted that electors were able to get a photo taken at the Civic Offices free of charge, or that electors could send in photos electronically, some electors were not aware of this option.

Cllr Morales suggested the application process for LECs should be reviewed, to make it more user friendly for all electors. This included renaming the attestation form 'Form A', and developing an online application form, as well as a PDF to download for completion. Officers welcomed these suggestions and Charlotte advised that areas of the LEC application process to be reviewed for future pilots had already been identified. Furthermore, she would liaise with IT regarding an online local elector card application.

C Griffiths

Cllr Morales also expressed concern that Customer Services staff could have given incorrect information to electors about the process. Charlotte confirmed that staff in Customer Services had received training on the process, however, it was agreed that this would be strengthened for next year, to reduce the risk of this occurring.

It was noted that at the Candidates and Agents briefing, the Returning Officer had advised that if anyone was aware of any electors who had concerns or difficulty with the required ID, to pass the details to the Electoral Services team who would be able to assist. Ray requested that if Councillors knew of any electors who still had difficulty with the ID arrangements, to let him or Electoral Services know, so that

arrangements for a LEC could be made. Ray informed the Panel that it was intended to still issue LECs to electors if they so requested, to enable more electors to have some form of photographic ID.

Councillor Morales suggested that the Council could work with large companies who employ local residents, to promote any future pilots. The companies could then assist employees with the process, paperwork and requirements to obtain a LEC. Due to the low unemployment levels in the Borough, this could capture a large number of electors. Charlotte agreed and would take this forward in the report to Council.

C. Griffiths

### Polling Day Arrangements

Prior to the pilot, Officers had discussed with Surrey Police the possibility of disruptions at polling stations. In practice, it was a successful day with little disruption at polling stations. One incident at a polling station was caused by a member of the public protesting that they should not have to provide photo ID to vote. This was quickly resolved as they were not on the electoral register and therefore could not vote anyway. The correct forms were posted out to enable them to sign up to the electoral register.

The Panel discussed the findings in the Communications evaluation report, which noted that above 30% of respondents “disapproved” or “strongly disapproved” of the trial, and 20% thought the election process with the new ID checks in place went either “badly” or “very badly”. The Chairman suggested that this may not be reflective of the Borough as a whole, and that those who felt negatively could be more likely to leave feedback. Charlotte drew attention to the high amount of the positive feedback on social media, from the roadshows and engagement in supermarkets prior to the vote which included constructive comments, however post election the feedback had become increasingly negative. Charlotte advised the Panel that the two interviews with BBC Surrey Radio in February and April had been positive. Councillor Whitehand felt that the national media had had a negative influence on the public, as national reports had put all the ID requirements for the different pilots together, rather than specifying what was required in each area.

It was also noted that several queries were received regarding why the pilot was being conducted, as this was not included in the promotional materials. This would be reviewed for any future pilot.

The Panel noted that there was no impact on postal vote figures, which had been a potential risk, where more electors would opt to vote by post, rather than in person, with ID, at the polling station. The number of postal votes issued in 2018 was in fact the same as the number issued in 2017.

With regards to the requirement for all parts of the community being aware of the requirements for ID, Ray advised that a wide variety of marketing methods were utilised in the lead up to the pilot which

included leaflets through doors, information on the website, radio interviews and community engagement in public locations e.g. supermarkets and the town centre, to ensure those without internet access were not disenfranchised. However any suggestions would be taken into consideration for future pilots.

Ray advised the Panel that if ID were required at a general election then more polling stations would potentially be required. However it was noted that this would only be the case if ID at polling stations was introduced nationally; pilots cannot be run at a general election.

### Pilot Costs

Charlotte confirmed that the cost claims had been submitted to the Cabinet Office on 5th July 2018. Any additional costs incurred for the election relating to the pilot would be met by the Cabinet Office. The main costs had related to the communications campaign, in particular Royal Mail costs for mailings to electors and households.

The Panel thanked Officers for the work carried out for the pilot and for the comprehensive report. With regard to making a recommendation for participation in any future pilots, there was a mixed response from Panel members. Some members felt that given the experience of the elections in May, the pilots should be continued to provide more evidence to fully evaluate the schemes. Other Panel members felt that there could be negative backlash from electors if the Council were to participate in another pilot.

It was noted that Council would consider the report at its meeting on 23 July.

### **3. 'Could you be a Councillor' Event 2018**

The Members of the Panel noted that the Council would be staging a 'Could you be a Councillor' event for any Members of Public interested in standing as a candidate in the 2019 May elections. Led by Councillor Colin Kemp, the Council's Lead Member for Member Learning and Development, the event would cover the practicalities of standing as a candidate in a Borough election and the realities of being a Councillor. Existing Councillors would be invited to attend to share their experiences.

The event would be held at the Civic Offices on the morning of Saturday, 21 July 2018 and invitations would be sent to local Political Groups in due course. The Members of the Panel were asked to promote the event to anyone interested in standing as a candidate in the coming year.

Councillor Whitehand offered her assistance at the event.

**4. Minutes.**

The minutes of the meeting of the Review Panel held on 25 January 2018 were received.

**5. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting**

Polling Station Location Review

The Panel noted that concerns had been raised about the use of the Oaktree Infant School in the St Johns West polling district at the recent election. Officers advised that a full review of all polling districts and polling places would be carried out in October 2018, and alternative arrangements would be sought.

**6. Any Other Business**

Councillor Morales asked Charlotte for the number of hits on the LEC webpage and if it could be included in the report, which Charlotte confirmed and would include. However the Chairman noted that it may not show an accurate figure for those who needed it as others, which included herself, viewed the webpage to see what it looked like etc.

**C Griffiths**

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Review Panel would be held on 23 January 2019.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and ended at 8.16 pm