

Voter ID Pilot Review

2 May 2019

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Government's manifesto in 2017 committed to introducing identification in polling stations, following the publication of Baron Pickles' review of electoral fraud in the UK.
- 1.2 In 2018, the Council participated in the first set of pilots to trial ID in polling stations. Following the success of the trial, where 99.73% of electors provided the correct form of ID, the Council agreed, at its meeting in July 2018, to offer to participate in any future pilots.
- 1.3 The Electoral Services Manager met with the Minister on 16 July at an Association of Electoral Administrators event to report on the experiences of the pilot in May 2018. Meeting with the Minister was very useful to emphasise the non-electoral benefits of introducing the Local Electoral Cards in Woking.
- 1.4 Following the publication of the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office's formal evaluations of the 2018 pilots, the Cabinet Office announced that pilots would be held in May 2019, to collect further evidence about the best way to implement voter ID nationally. The Cabinet Office offered all local authorities in Great Britain the opportunity to pilot voter identification in their May 2019 local elections.
- 1.5 The Cabinet Office, working with the Electoral Commission and (AEA), developed pilot models for May 2019. To assist with the evaluation after the elections, each pilot model was applied consistently to each authority using that specific model.
- 1.6 Ten authorities were involved in the pilots, and their pilot scheme is set out below:

Authority	Pilot Model
Braintree District Council	Mixed (Photographic and Non-Photographic)
Broxtowe Borough Council	Mixed
Craven District Council	Mixed
Derby City Council	Mixed
Mid Sussex District Council	Poll Card
North Kesteven District Council	Mixed
North West Leicestershire District Council	Poll Card
Pendle Borough Council	Photo ID only
Watford Borough Council	Poll Card
Woking Borough Council	Photo ID only

- 1.7 Officers worked with the Cabinet Office to revise the list of photographic ID to be trailed in the polling stations, based on the experiences in Woking in May 2018.
- 1.8 The revised list of ID to be accepted in the polling stations was:
 - Passport – UK and Crown Dependency, EU and Commonwealth
 - Photo Driving Licence - UK and Crown Dependency, EU
 - EEA Photographic Identity Card
 - UK Biometric Residence Permit

- Concessionary Pass funded by HM Government (e.g. Surrey Senior Bus Pass, Disabled People's Bus Pass)
- Oyster 60+ Card
- PASS card
- MOD ID Card
- Blue Badge Holder Photocard
- Northern Ireland Electoral Identity Card
- Local Elector Card

1.9 The ID required and the processes for administering the pilot in the polling station were set out in the Woking Borough Council (Identification in Polling Stations) Pilot Order 2019. The Order was drafted in consultation with Officers and the Electoral Commission, and the final Order was signed by the Minister for the Constitution on 26 February 2019, which enabled the pilot to run on 2 May 2019.

2.0 Planning and Engagement

2.1 Officers worked closely with the Cabinet Office (CO) and the Electoral Commission (EC) to finalise the arrangements for the pilot.

2.2 Officers attended meetings with the Cabinet Office on a regular basis from November 2018 to February 2019, to scrutinise the proposals and detailed plans for the pilot. Additionally, fortnightly telephone conference calls were held to discuss the communications plans, which were held every week in the run up to polling day.

2.3 On Monday, 4 February 2019 the Electoral Services Manager and the Electoral Services Officer also met with the Minister for the Constitution to discuss the preparations for the ID pilots at the AEA annual conference.

2.4 As in 2018, several plans were put in place, to ensure different elements of the pilot could be monitored. The project plan, the integrity plan and risk register for the election was strengthened to reflect the additional risks associated with the pilot, particularly with regard to the Local Elector Cards, and communicating the correct ID that electors were required to bring.

2.5 Officers revised the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the pilot, identifying groups who could be affected by the ID pilot and what action should be taken to minimise the impact on electors in these groups. A copy of the final EIA is set out at Appendix 1. The EIA was circulated to the Cabinet Office, who shared it with the Human Rights and Equalities Commission, who provided valuable feedback to strengthen the EIA.

2.6 On 15 February 2019, Officers attended a panel interview at the Cabinet Office. The aim of this exercise was to assure all involved in the delivery of the pilot of the quality of Officer's preparations, as well as challenging the plans to highlight further risks and mitigations. The panel's main focus was to review key elements of the pilot plans: the Equalities Impact Assessment, the pilot risk assessment, staff training plan and media strategy. This interview went very well, and the Panel commended the work Officers had undertaken for the EIA.

3.0 Judicial Review

3.1 On 5 December 2018, the Council was advised of an intended Judicial Review against the Cabinet Office. The claimant intended to challenge the proposal by the Cabinet Office to run voter identification pilot schemes during the May 2019 elections, alleging that the pilot schemes were ultra vires.

- 3.2 Throughout the planning process, Officers planned for the contingency that the pilot could be cancelled if the JR was successful. The main focus of the contingency plans related to communicating to electors that ID would not be required.
- 3.3 Contingency poll cards were prepared, to ensure that in the event of the Judicial Review being successful that the poll card issue would not be delayed. Any additional costs related to the contingency planning were covered by the Cabinet Office.
- 3.4 Notification was received on 20 March that the claimant had been unsuccessful.

4.0 ID Checking Process

- 4.1 The provision of photo ID applied to all electors voting in person at the polling station, both electors and proxies. In the case of proxies, they would be required to bring their own ID, not ID for the voter on whose behalf the proxy was voting.
- 4.2 The process to be followed in the polling station was the same as in 2018. The stages to be followed are set out below:
 - 1. Electors hand over their ID to polling station staff; *[the ID is not checked at this stage]*
 - 2. Electors confirm their name and address *[this is normal practice in the polling station; even where electors bring their poll card, they are still required to state their name and address]*
 - 3. Staff check the register and confirm that the elector is eligible to be issued with a ballot paper
 - 4. Elector's ID is checked to verify their identity.
 - 5. Staff issue the ballot paper to the elector, marking the register, the data collection form and the Corresponding Numbers List with the elector's elector number.
- 4.3 The checking of the ID after confirmation of the elector's name and address was planned as an extra measure against personation, as the elector would not be able to read out the details of the elector on the ID provided.
- 4.4 Where there were queries regarding the ID provided, poll clerks were instructed to refer the elector to the Presiding Officer (PO), who would discuss the situation with the elector and decide whether a ballot paper could be issued.
- 4.5 As in 2018, out of date/expired documents could be used, as long as the photo on the ID was still of a good likeness. However, digital images would not be accepted; the original document had to be produced in the polling station.
- 4.6 Where electors forgot to bring their ID, or brought incorrect ID, this would be recorded in the polling station. Electors would be able to return later in the day with the correct ID; they would not be prohibited from re-entering the polling station. In such instances, electors were given a card setting out the permitted forms ID, to ensure they returned with the correct form of ID.
- 4.7 Screens were issued to all polling places to ensure all there was provision for electors who required to have their ID checked in private.

- 4.8 The list of acceptable IDs was varied and examples were given to polling station staff at training and in the polling station. Staff were advised to work on a 'face-value' approach to unfamiliar documents (e.g. passports from commonwealth countries) and, unless there were clear suspicions of a document being fraudulent, to accept the document.
- 4.9 Where poll clerks referred queries to the PO, POs were instructed to be 'reasonable' in their dealings with electors whose ID had been queried. Where there was a name discrepancy, POs were advised to discuss the discrepancy with the elector to determine the reason for the difference. In such situations, the POs were advised that they had to be satisfied with the explanation before issuing a ballot paper.
- 4.10 Guidance for staff was circulated giving suggestions on what action to take in a variety of circumstances, depending on the type of query. In some cases, for example, where electors had changed their name, perhaps due to marriage, electors were able to provide additional ID, e.g. bank cards/marriage certificate, if they so wished. Whilst not on the official list of ID, these other forms of ID could be used to confirm the veracity of the elector's explanation. There was no requirement to ask for additional, supporting evidence, nor could electors be forced to provide it, but if the elector offered it, this could be used.
- 4.11 POs were also able to contact Electoral Services, to check the details against the Electoral Register, which has name change details and other records which POs, do not have access to in the polling station.
- 4.12 The process for ballot refusal forms was clarified so that these were only to be issued in the following circumstances: where an elector was using obviously fake ID and where an elector was using genuine ID, but that the PO was suspicious that the person was attempting personation.

5.0 Data Collection

- 5.1 As part of the evaluation of the pilot, staff at polling stations recorded what forms of ID were presented at polling stations. Staff were required to mark when the elector had been issued with a ballot paper, as normal, and also mark what type of ID was provided. To track the journey of an elector bringing ID, staff were also required to mark where an elector brought no ID or incorrect ID, to trace how many of these electors later returned with the correct ID.
- 5.2 The data collection form took the same format as in 2018, and was incorporated with the electoral register used in the polling station. Next to the register details, a grid was printed to mark the ID provided by each elector. This grid was separated from the register after close of polls as this would not form part of the official Marked Register.
- 5.3 After the election, the ID data from the polling stations was collated. Despite emphasis at the training session, unfortunately there were 113 instances of recording errors on the data collection forms.

6.0 Local Elector Card

- 6.1 Continuing the provisions from the 2018 pilot, where electors did not have one form of the specified ID, they would be able to obtain a Local Elector Card (LEC) from the Returning Officer. This would be locally produced photographic ID, which the elector would have to show at the polling station.

- 6.2 To obtain a LEC, electors completed an application form and provided a witnessed photo and copies of supporting documents. Where an elector did not have any supporting documents to accompany the LEC application, an attestation could be completed by another registered elector
- 6.3 The requirements for LEC were reviewed in November 2018, which took into consideration the experiences of all pilots in 2018. The requirements for witnessing the applicant's picture, the list of documents to be provided to support the application and the requirements for attesting an application were all reviewed.
- 6.4 The list of supporting documents was expanded, with a view to making the application process more accessible. Also the eligibility for witnesses and attesters was revised so that any registered elector could do either, rather than being restricted to living in Woking.
- 6.5 Following feedback from the 2018 pilot, the LEC application form was revised and simplified to assist electors. Hard copies were available for electors to be sent/collect from the Civic Offices and also a fillable pdf version was available online.
- 6.6 An e-form was developed to enable electors to apply online and upload all necessary supporting documents. An automated email was sent to the applicant's nominated witness to confirm the elector's identity, which linked back to the original application.
- 6.7 The form for an attester was online, however attesters were directed to print out the form, as a signature was required for this part of the process.
- 6.8 Hard copies of photos were not required and the Electoral Services team were able to take photos of electors if requested at the Civic Offices. In such cases, hard copies were given to the electors to be witnessed, and the digital image used to create the LEC once the completed application had been received. Photos were also taken at the roadshows in the Borough, and copies sent to the electors for witnessing.
- 6.9 LEC application forms were offered and supplied to political parties, to pass on to electors they identified when canvassing who informed canvassers that they did not have any of the required ID. These were made available following the Candidates and Agents briefing in March 2019. Candidates and Agents were also asked to pass details of electors who required additional assistance to obtain a LEC to Electoral Services so that this could be followed up prior to the election.
- 6.10 The deadline for applications for LEC was 5pm, Wednesday, 1 May 2019. Although contingency arrangements were in place for a surge in late applications, no applications were received on 1 May.
- 6.11 In total, 27 local elector cards were issued for the election, including one for a registered postal voter.
- 6.12 Of the 27 LECs issued, fifteen applications were supported with an attestation, as the elector did not have the necessary supporting documents. The remaining applications were submitted with the required supporting documents. All applications were accompanied with a suitable witnessed photograph.

6.13 The timescales for the applications is set out below.

Week No.	Date	LECs issued		No. of LECs applications declined
		No.	%	
1	4 February 2019	0	0	0
2	11 February 2019	0	0	0
3	18 February 2019	0	0	0
4	25 February 2019	0	0	0
5	4 March 2019	0	0	0
6	11 March 2019	5	18.5	0
7	18 March 2019	2	7.4	0
8	25 March 2019	1	3.7	0
9	1 April 2019	11	40.7	0
10	8 April 2019	2	7.4	0
11	15 April 2019	0	0	0
12	22 April 2019	2	7.4	0
13	30 April 2019	4	14.8	0
TOTAL		27		0

6.14 The applications were received from electors across the Borough. A breakdown of the ward issue numbers is set out below:

Ward	LECs Issued	
	No.	%
Byfleet and West Byfleet	2	7.41
Canalside	4	14.81
Goldsworth Park	1	3.70
Heathlands	0	0
Hoe Valley	7	25.93
Horsell	2	7.41
Knaphill	3	11.11
Mount Hermon	7	25.93
Pyrford	0	0
St John's	1	3.70
Total	27	

6.15 It can be seen that as LECs were issued from March when electors were prompted from the elections leaflet issued to arrange their ID. The increase in issue around 11 April can be attributed to the success of the promotional work carried out with the York Road Project.

6.16 Having worked successfully with the York Road Project in 2018, Officers returned on 25 March to register eight new electors and arrange LECs for these electors. The session was advertised by the York Road Project as an opportunity to get photo ID which would support opening bank accounts, assessing housing and improving their credit score. This continues to be a beneficial outcome of the Local Elector Cards, to help vulnerable people in the Borough.

6.17 All electors who had been issued with a LEC in 2018 were contacted in March 2019, confirming that they would be able to use their LEC in the polling station on 2 May. Of the 63 electors who were issued with cards in 2018, 52 were still eligible to vote in May 2019. Therefore the total number of valid LECs in circulation for the election was 79.

7.0 Media Strategy and Public Engagement

- 7.1 Officers from the Marketing Communications team and Electoral Services worked closely with the Cabinet Office Communications Team to develop the media strategy and communications plan for the ID pilot. Whilst some elements were consistent across all areas taking part in the pilot, each strategy was tailored to meet local requirements.
- 7.2 The campaign followed a similar format to that of 2018, although the main campaign started in March 2019, rather than February. The overarching strategy for the media campaign was to remind electors to bring the relevant ID and raise awareness of the Local Elector Card, to ensure the number of electors not able to vote was kept to a minimum.
- 7.3 The EIA was used to inform the objectives for the media strategy and communications plan, to ensure the messages could be adapted to meet the requirements of identified target groups.
- 7.4 Additional work was carried out this year to target electors with potentially lower literacy levels. Local recruitment agencies were contacted to share information and local businesses were contacted through Woking Works and the Federation of Small Businesses.
- 7.5 A copy of the final evaluation of the media campaign is attached at Appendix 2. Set out below are details of key elements of the campaign to promote the ID pilot.

Elections Leaflet

- 7.6 All electors and all properties with no registered electors were sent an information leaflet about the pilots in March 2019. There was a delay to the publication of the leaflet, as the final Pilot order was not signed until 26 February 2019, so no details of the scheme could be published prior to this date.
- 7.7 In addition to general information about the election (e.g. key dates for the election, the role of Woking Borough Council, who is eligible to vote, how to vote and electoral offences), the leaflet set out specific information relating the pilot (what ID is required (changed from 2018); how to apply for a local elector card and ID pilot contact details

Roadshows

- 7.8 Four roadshows were held across the Borough in March and April at two supermarkets (Goldsworth Park Waitrose and Asda in Sheerwater) and a stand in Woking Town Centre and in Woking Park. These roadshows were promoted as an opportunity for electors to finalise their ID and find out more about the local elector card.
- 7.9 Officers also attended the Shah Jahan Mosque one Friday lunchtime to pass on information to attendees after prayers.
- 7.10 Officers attended Woking College and St John the Baptist Sixth Form to promote the pilot among students and staff.
- 7.11 Officers also attended Citizens Advice and the WBC/SCC Supported Living Accommodation meeting, to brief officers about the pilot, focussing on support for the Local Elector Card.

Electoral Registration Communications

- 7.12 Information about the pilot was included on all registration confirmation letters. This would ensure anyone registering after the initial leaflet mail-out, and prior to the poll cards being issued, would get the information individually. This would also increase the time available for the elector to arrange their ID for polling day.

Sky AdSmart Campaign/Eagle Ad Messenger

- 7.13 Using Sky AdSmart, residents in the Borough were targeted with the digital video in advert breaks during programmes.
- 7.14 Additionally, using Eagle Ad Messenger, electors within Woking were targeted with digital messaging through websites accessed via websites.

Social Media

- 7.15 Advertising via social media raised awareness and gave Officers the opportunity to answer elector questions in a forum-style discussion, or debunk myths and misinformation when it arose.

8.0 Election Staff

- 8.1 With the Returning Officer on sick leave, the Deputy Chief Executive, was appointed as Deputy Returning Officer to oversee the election. Three additional DROs were appointed with full powers 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 and the count.
- 8.2 The election was managed by the Electoral Services Manager (ESM), with support from two Electoral Services Officers and one Electoral Services Assistant.
- 8.3 The issue and opening of postal votes was managed by the Democratic Services Manager, supported by the Democratic Services team.
- 8.4 Based on the experiences of 2018, the staffing levels at polling stations were kept within the guidelines issued by the Electoral Commission. No additional staff were put in place.
- 8.5 With the possibility for checking ID in private, all polling station teams were mixed, to ensure that a female member of staff was available for checks if required.
- 8.6 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.
- 8.7 The Electoral Commission provided questionnaires for all polling station staff to complete after 7pm on polling day, to contribute to the evaluation of the pilot.

9.0 Staff Training

- 9.1 All polling station staff were required to attend a two hour training session to cover the requirements for polling day. The training sessions were split into two one-hour long sessions. All staff were trained together, rather than the historic split between Presiding

Officers and Poll Clerks. Training all staff together ensured that there would be extra resilience in the teams, particularly if a Poll Clerk had to take on Presiding Officer duties unexpectedly.

9.2 A breakdown of the session topics is set out below:

Session 1 – Electoral Services Manager	Session 2 – Electoral Services Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-election day checks • Setting up the polling station (with reference to set up and use of private ID checking area; posters (with examples)) • Who can attend the polling station • Accessibility • Special Voting Procedures – proxy voters, assisted electors, spoilt ballot papers • Documentation • Who is eligible to vote? • Marking the CNL • Issuing the Ballot Papers • Postal Votes • Close of Poll Arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elector journey in the polling station • What ID is going to be accepted (examples of the different types; requirement for original document; expired/out of date ID) • Checking the ID (face value, in private on request) • How to record the ID on the register • ID scenarios

9.3 Training sessions were held on 12, 14, 18 and 21 March and 11 April 2019. Training sessions were mandatory and all staff working in the polling station had to attend one of the sessions.

9.4 All staff were issued with a handbook for the elections. This was amended by Officers locally from the Electoral Commission handbook usually issued for elections, to take account of the pilot requirements and circulated this to all polling station staff.

9.5 A final briefing was held on Monday, 29 April 2019. The ESM repeated the key messages for election day, and the Deputy Returning Officer emphasised the need for consistency on polling day: checking all electors for ID, being reasonable in their approach to electors and accurately marking the data collection form.

9.6 Count supervisors were briefed on the processes to be followed prior to the start of the count.

9.7 Overall, staff reported that the training that they received regarding the ID requirements and the process to be followed in the polling station was good and prepared them for polling day.

10.0 Engagement with Surrey Police

10.1 Officers worked with Surrey Police in the lead up to the election to ensure the necessary support was available in the lead up to the election and specifically on polling day itself.

10.2 The work with Surrey Police had two components; working with the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in the Economic Crime Unit if any allegations of electoral fraud were received and working with the Neighbourhood Team to respond to local issues on polling day. Based on experiences in 2018, there was a risk of disorder at polling stations being caused by electors who disagreed with the pilot.

10.3 There was very positive engagement with the Neighbourhood Team and the SPOC team, Arrangements were in place on polling day which ensured the ESM had direct numbers to the Neighbourhood Team in case of issues at polling stations.

11.0 Nominations and Candidates

Candidates and Agents' Briefing

11.1 The briefing for Candidates and Agents was given by the Deputy Chief Executive in his capacity as Deputy Returning Officer and the Electoral Services Manager on Monday, 11 March 2019. All candidates, agents and campaigners were invited to the briefing, and the briefing was well attended.

11.2 The presentation outlined:

ID pilot

- the ID required in polling stations
- how to get a Local Elector Card
- the process to be followed in the polling station
- how candidates and their supporters can help

Election Preparations

- the election timetable
- the nomination process
- the conduct expected of candidates and supporters, including the Memorandum of Understanding
- electoral offences
- electoral expenses

11.3 Examples of the publicity materials, as well as Local Elector Card application forms, were also available at the briefing.

Nominations

11.4 The deadline for nominations for the elections was 4pm on Friday, 3 April 2019. All nominations were received before the 4pm deadline, and all were deemed to be valid nominations.

Election Expenses

11.5 The deadline for the return of candidates' expenses was Friday, 6 June 2019. The completed expenses returns have been filed with the Returning Officer and will be stored securely at the Civic Offices for two years.

12.0 Poll Cards

12.1 Poll cards are a key element of the election, to notify electors of the forthcoming election. The poll cards for polling station electors and any appointed proxies were kept as A4 size to ensure all the required working was included on the cards. The poll cards for postal voters and proxy postal voters were kept at A5 size as they were not affected by the pilot.

12.2 The A4 poll cards were sent out in covering envelopes printed with 'DO NOT IGNORE THIS ENVELOPE: POLL CARD ENCLOSED' and also included the Voter ID thumbnail logo, to reduce the risk of the envelope being ignored.

12.3 Poll cards were issued to all electors in Woking on 26 March 2019, when the Notice of Election was published, 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.

13.0 Postal Votes

Issue of Postal Vote Packs

- 13.1 13,256 postal votes were issued overall for the Borough election. It can be seen that this is a lower number than in recent years.

Year	No. Of Postal Votes Issued
2016	12,236
2017	13,339
2018	13,339
2019	13,256

- 13.2 The first set of postal votes were issued on Thursday, 11 and Friday, 12 April 2019. Additional sets of postal votes were issued on 16 and 23 April 2019. These were for electors who registered to vote on 12 April (registration deadline) and those who applied for a postal vote on 15 April (postal vote deadline).
- 13.3 Where any postal votes were cancelled by the 11 April, these postal ballot packs were removed and destroyed.
- 13.4 The table below sets out the number of postal votes issued for each ward.

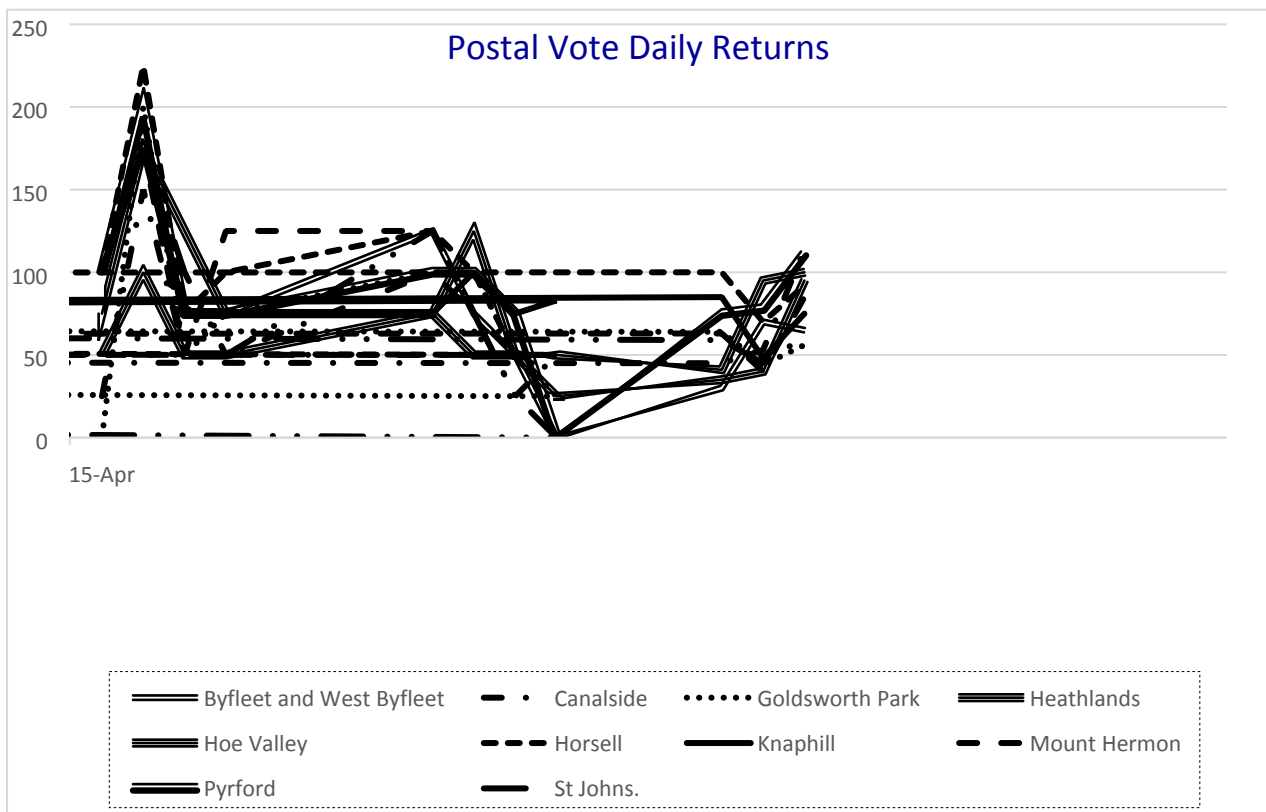
Ward	Total
Byfleet and West Byfleet	1,388
Canalside	1,135
Goldsworth Park	1,132
Heathlands	1,486
Hoe Valley	967
Horsell	1,587
Knaphill	1,398
Mount Hermon	1,366
Pyrford	1,577
St John's	1,220
Total	13,256

- 13.5 In total, 21 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.

Postal Vote Returns

- 13.6 To be included in the election, postal votes had to be returned by 10pm on 2 May. On arrival at the Civic Offices, returned postal votes are stored by ward, and are sorted in to bundles of 25. The table and graph below sets out the returns distribution by date.

Date	Byfleet and West Byfleet	Canalside	Goldsworth Park	Heathlands	Hoe Valley	Horsell	Knaphill	Mount Hermon	Pyrford	St Johns.
15/04	101	25	0	75	50	100	100	100	100	100
16/04	175	150	200	175	100	225	175	175	200	175
17/04	75	50	50	125	50	75	75	50	75	100
18/04	75	50	75	75	50	100	75	125	75	50
23/04	125	100	100	75	75	125	75	125	100	125
24/04	75	75	100	125	50	100	100	75	100	75
25/04	50	25	50	50	50	50	75	50	75	25
26/04/	0	50	25	50	25	50	83	50	0	0
29/04	113	60	80	83	25	95	0	54	102	113
30/04	30	45	64	41	35	100	85	63	75	60
01/05	70	53	44	95	40	70	48	40	78	45
02/05	65	114	56	100	95	92	75	85	111	61
TOTAL	954	797	844	1,069	645	1,182	966	992	1091	929



13.7 It can be seen that after the spike in postal votes returned after the initial issue, there was a steady rate of return in the week before the election. During election week, there was an increase in returns until polling day.

Opening of Postal Votes

- 13.8 Opening sessions started on Tuesday, 23 April 2019. 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.
- 13.9 In total 11 opening sessions were held. 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.
- 13.10 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 48 postal votes being received.
- 13.11 In total, 854 postal votes were received on polling day which were processed and verified by 12.00am.
- 13.12 Two candidates and their supporters attended postal vote opening sessions and observed the opening process, including the verification and adjudication of electors' postal vote statements.

Postal Votes – Returns Analysis

- 13.13 Set out below is a summary of the returned postal vote envelopes returned. The overall return rate for the Borough was 71.6%.

Ward	Total
Byfleet and West Byfleet	954
Canalside	797
Goldsworth Park	844
Heathlands	1,069
Hoe Valley	645
Horsell	1,182
Knaphill	966
Mount Hermon	992
Pyrford	1,091
St John's	929
Total	9,468

Initial Verification of Returns

- 13.14 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.

- Ballot Paper Envelope missing.
- Postal Vote Statement was absent.

13.15 The number of statements rejected at this stage was:

Ward	Total Envelopes Received	Total Statements Rejected/Absent	Total Sent to Scanner
Byfleet and West Byfleet	954	21	933
Canalside	797	16	781
Goldsworth Park	844	13	831
Heathlands	1,069	19	1,050
Hoe Valley	645	18	627
Horsell	1,182	16	1,166
Knaphill	966	11	955
Mount Hermon	992	13	979
Pyrford	1,091	15	1,076
St John's	928	8	920
Borough Total	9,468	150	9,318

Verification of Postal Vote Statements

13.16 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.

13.17 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.

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

Ward	Valid	Rejected		Rejected		
		No.	%	DOB & Sig	DOB	Sig
Byfleet and West Byfleet	913	20	2.14	4	4	12
Canalside	750	31	3.97	4	4	23
Goldsworth Park	817	14	1.68	0	5	9
Heathlands	1,037	13	1.24	0	6	7
Hoe Valley	618	9	1.44	0	1	8
Horsell	1,144	22	1.89	1	6	15
Knaphill	932	23	2.41	8	3	12
Mount Hermon	963	16	1.64	0	3	13
Pyrford	1,057	19	1.77	2	8	9
St John's	900	20	2.17	1	1	18
Borough Total	9,131	187	2.01	20	41	126

13.19 The rejection rate for postal vote statements at the scanner was 2.01%. This compares to 1.44% in 2018 and 1.45% in 2019.

Post - Scanning Checks

13.20 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

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

Ward	Total accepted at the scanner	Rejected at post scanning stage	Total Postal votes accepted
Byfleet and West Byfleet	913	1	912
Canalside	750	0	750
Goldsworth Park	817	0	817
Heathlands	1,037	0	1,037
Hoe Valley	618	2	616
Horsell	1,144	0	1,144
Knaphill	932	0	932
Mount Hermon	963	0	963
Pyrford	1,057	1	1,056
St John's	900	3	897
Borough Total	9,131	7	9,124

13.22 The overall rejection rates are set out below:

Ward	Postal Votes Accepted	Postal Votes Rejected	% of Postal Votes rejected
Byfleet and West Byfleet	912	42	4.40
Canalside	750	47	5.89
Goldsworth Park	817	27	3.19
Heathlands	1,037	32	2.99
Hoe Valley	616	29	4.49
Horsell	1,144	38	3.21
Knaphill	932	34	3.51
Mount Hermon	963	29	2.92
Pyrford	1,056	35	3.20
St John's	897	31	3.34
Borough Total	9,124	344	3.63

13.23 The overall rejection rate at 3.63. This compares to 3.27 in 2018 and 3.79% in 2017.

13.24 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.

14.0 Polling Stations

- 14.1 43 polling stations were used for the elections in 29 venues.
- 14.2 All polling equipment, including the privacy screens were delivered prior to polling day and Presiding Officers were asked to record any issues that occurred or were reported on 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.
- 14.3 Additional vinyl signs were provided to all polling stations to be put up out the polling stations reminding electors to bring their ID. Fliers were also available in the polling stations to be given to electors who brought the wrong or no ID. Translations in eight languages were also provided: Bengali, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish and Urdu. A large print copy of the details was also available.
- 14.4 Polling stations were also issued with a hard copy of the final pilot Order, for instances where electors queried the validity of the pilot.

Trinity Methodist Church

- 14.5 There was a printing issue with the register for polling station 26, which resulted in seven streets being omitted. The elections team was notified by the Presiding Officer of the problem at 7.09am, and the missing pages were in place by 7.25am. Three electors were affected by this issue, two who of whom were verified over the phone and were issued with a ballot paper, and one elector who was not able to wait and subsequently did not vote.
- 14.6 Following queries raised on social media, the Deputy Returning Officer issued a press release confirming what action had been taken to rectify the problem. All polling stations were contacted immediately to verify that this was an isolated incident and the Electoral Commission was kept informed of all action taken to rectify the error.
- 14.7 The Electoral Services Manager spoke to the affected elector at 3pm, who was advised that the polling station would be open until 10pm that evening, should they wish to return to cast their vote. Unfortunately there were no other legal options available to assist the elector to cast their vote. The elector confirmed that they had a prior engagement and therefore would not be able to return to Woking to vote.
- 14.8 As a result of this issue, the checking procedures for the printing of register have been revised, and additional guidance has been created for Presiding Officers for checking their paperwork prior to election day.

Brookwood Memorial Hall

- 14.9 The Presiding Officer reported that there was a power cut at Brookwood Memorial Hall in the early afternoon, which was affecting the Brookwood area. Arrangements were put in place to install a generator, however power was restored with no adverse impact on polling.

Al-Asr Education and Community Centre

- 14.10 An elector tripped over the ledge of doors being used as the exit for the polling station. The elector was not injured, however, high visibility warning tape was put in place with

notices warning of the step. This exit will be assessed and a temporary ramp purchased for future elections to resolve this issue.

Oaktree Infant School

- 14.11 Oaktree Infant School is the designated polling place for the St John's West polling district. Following the Parliamentary Polling District and Polling Place Review which was carried out in autumn 2018, and reported to Council in December 2018, Officers undertook to develop proposals in 2019 for permanent community facilities in the area, which would remove the need to use the school as the polling place for the area.
- 14.12 During the review, Officers investigated the option of the use of temporary cabins, alternative sites in the area, as well as revising the polling district arrangements so that electors in the area vote at the St John's Memorial Hall on St John's Lye. This final proposal was considered unreasonable for electors living in the Hermitage estate, many of whom may find it difficult to travel further to the polling place.
- 14.13 It has become apparent that developing such proposals will not be finalised in the short term, and alternative arrangements will not be in place for the local elections scheduled for May 2020. At recent elections, an arrangement has been in place with the school to use the front class room as the polling station, which enables the school to remain open on polling day. Whilst not ideal, this compromise is preferable to the school being required to close, and this arrangement will need to continue in 2020.
- 14.14 The Elections and Electoral Registration Review Panel were advised of this position at their meeting on 4 July and have been assured that Officers will be continuing to investigate alternative provision in the area.

Observers

- 14.15 Observers from the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office attended all polling stations in Woking to observe proceedings.

15.0 ID Provision in the polling stations

- 15.1 As previously reported, the polling station staff recorded the form of ID provided by electors when marking the register. This information was then separated to form the marked registers for the polling station.

15.2 A full breakdown of the types of ID provided at the polling station is set out at Appendix 3.

Ward	Verification Total	ID Presented Total	Driving Licence	Passport	Concessionary Pass	EEA ID Card	Biometric Residence	Blue Badge Photo ID	Local Elector Card	Military Pass	PASS Card	Oyster 60+	NI Electoral ID Card
Byfleet and West Byfleet	1789	1771	1206	353	188	6	4	9	4	0	1	0	0
Canalside	2017	2010	1247	554	112	41	38	10	6	1	1	0	0
Goldsworth Park	1637	1623	1012	382	206	4	4	8	3	1	3	0	0
Heathlands	1754	1745	1155	418	135	7	8	14	5	1	1	1	0
Hoe Valley	1423	1420	936	333	109	18	5	8	5	6	0	0	0
Horsell	1978	1966	1289	472	186	6	3	6	2	1	1	0	0
Knaphill	1723	1706	1141	343	196	4	9	9	4	0	0	0	0
Mount Hermon	1839	1828	1222	465	106	5	21	3	6	0	0	0	0
Pyrford	1865	1859	1268	394	166	10	7	7	0	7	0	0	0
St John's	1815	1809	1155	416	207	12	9	8	2	0	0	0	0
Total	17840	17737	11631	4130	1611	113	108	82	37	17	7	1	0

15.3 It is clear that photo driving licences and passports were the most popular form of ID used in the polling station.

15.4 Unfortunately, there were 103 recording errors in the polling stations on the data collection, despite the need for accuracy being emphasised at staff training.

15.5 The details of the electors who provided incorrect ID or no ID is set out below:

Ward	Wrong ID - Returned with Correct	No ID - Returned with Correct	Wrong ID - No Return	No ID - No Return
Byfleet and West Byfleet	0	9	0	1
Canalside	0	19	2	7
Goldsworth Park	1	7	1	3
Heathlands	0	6	0	1
Hoe Valley	1	7	1	2
Horsell	1	5	1	0
Knaphill	1	0	0	0
Mount Hermon	1	3	0	0
Pyrford	1	0	1	0
St John's	1	2	0	2
Total	7	58	6	16

- 15.6 The table below sets out a comparison with 2018 for those electors who brought no or the wrong form of ID to the polling station.

	Wrong ID - Returned with Correct	No ID - Returned with Correct	Wrong ID - No Return	No ID - No Return	Total - Returns	Total - No Returns
2018	19	19	23	28	38	51
2019	7	58	6	16	65	22

- 15.7 Although the overall the number of people who brought no ID or the wrong ID reduced from 89 to 87, the number of people not returning to the polling station reduced significantly from 51 in 2018 to 22 in 2019.

- 15.8 No ballot refusal forms were completed for this election.

16.0 Verification and Count

- 16.1 All polling station documentation and ballot boxes were returned to HG Wells on Thursday, 2 May following the close of polls. These were stored in the Wells Room overnight with additional security guard presence.

- 16.2 The verification and count was held on Friday, 3 May 2019 at HG Wells Conference and Events Centre from 10am.

- 16.3 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.

- 16.4 The counts in the Wells Room were completed and teams released by 2pm and the counts in the Kemp Room continued until 2.30pm.

- 16.5 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.

- 16.6 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.

- 16.7 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 news coverage was also provided in the Griffin Bar.

Storage of Documents

- 16.8 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, 3 May.

Media Coverage

- 16.9 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

16.10 The average turnout for the elections was 36.32%.

17.0 Costs

17.1 The costs for the pilot have been submitted to the Cabinet Office, which will be covering the additional costs incurred. A breakdown of the costs is set out below:

Staffing Costs

17.2 All polling station staff were paid an increased fee for training, as they were required to attend more training, and also the fee for the day was increased, to reflect the additional responsibilities in the polling station.

Role	Number	Normal fee per staff member (£)	Pilot fee per staff member	Additional cost of pilot
Presiding Officer fee	43	199.00	250.00	2,193.00
Poll clerk fee	93	119.00	150.00	2,883.00
Presiding Officer training	43	40.00	60.00	860.00
Poll clerk training	91	20.00	30.00	910.00
TOTAL				6,846

Poll Card Costs

17.3 As stated previously, the poll cards for polling station electors were printed on A4 paper, in colour, and were enveloped. Therefore there was additional printing and enveloping costs for the poll cards.

Item	Number	Additional Costs for Pilot (£)
Poll card printing	62,206	4,973.00
Poll Card Envelope and Fulfilment	62,206	4,998.00
Poll Card Postage	62,206	8,887.23
TOTAL		18,858.23

Polling Station Equipment Costs

17.4 Two ID card printers were purchased in 2018 for the generation of the Local Elector Cards. Two were purchased to ensure there was resilience within the card production process. 35 privacy screens were also purchased in 2018, to be placed at each polling place, with spares if required.

17.5 As such, there were minimal additional costs for equipment to support the pilot this year.

Publicity

17.6 The table below sets out the costs for the publicity for the pilot.

Item	Description/Content	Additional Cost of Pilot (£)
Household Leaflet	Leaflet distributed to every elector and household with no registered electors, to outline the details of the election and ID pilot in March 2019. This leaflet is usually sent to every household before each election.	14,191.20
Household Leaflet Postage		27,732.00
Council Tax Flier	A5 Flier included in Council Tax mailing, March 2019	552.00
Car Park Banner	Banner for Car Park in Woking	444.00
Digital Film Production	30 second film for social media and TV advertising	1,800.00
Floor Stickers	Floor Stickers promoting Voter ID for Various locations in Wolsey Place and Peacocks Shopping Centre	1953.05
Newspaper Advertising	Woking News and Mail, Surrey Advertiser content promoting ID	3,747.00
Round and About' Magazine advertising	Locally distributed magazine	1,260.00
Facebook Advertising	Reminder to bring ID post, video awareness campaign and survey distribution	769.42
Ad Messenger Campaign	Targeted message for local internet users	2,400.00
Sky Ad	Advertising via SkyBox for Woking residents	2,979.60
Radio Woking Advertising	Reminder to bring ID	276.00
Artwork Design	Artwork Design for additional items of publicity	1,491.00
Easy Read LEC Guidance	Easy Read guide to completing LEC applications	48.00
Translation Costs	Translation of key documents into 8 languages	360.00
Voter ID Posters/Fliers	A4, A3, Large print posters/fliers	1,509.29
Voter ID Promotional materials	T-shirts, pens and badges for roadshow, front line staff, Centres for the Community and political parties	1,309.50
Voter ID Business Cards	Promotional materials for roadshow, front line staff and political parties	624.00
Voter ID Pop-Up Banners	Pop-up banners for roadshows, Civic Offices, front line staff and Centres for the Community	1,530.00
TOTAL		64,976.06

17.7 The costs include direct mailings to electors, as well as generic marketing materials. The pilot Order was not signed until February 2019, therefore the household leaflet could not be included in the usual Household Notification Letter issued to each property in early February. As such, an additional mailout was required to circulate the leaflet.

18.0 Electoral Integrity

18.1 The Deputy Returning Officer received several complaints during the campaign from candidates and campaigners regarding the publicity materials and conduct of other candidates.

18.2 The complaints covered the following issues:

- Depiction of poll cards in candidates' publicity
- The use of the Woking Borough Council emblem
- Display of publicity materials
- The inappropriate content of publicity materials
- The conduct of candidates at / in the vicinity of polling stations on polling day

18.3 All complaints were dealt with during the election period. Additional guidance has been drafted (attached at Appendix 4) that will be circulated to all candidates and agents at future election which clarifies what candidates and their campaigners can and can't do as part of their campaign.

19.0 Going forward

19.1 The Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission will be publishing their formal evaluations in the summer. Officers have given evidence to support their evaluations, based on the council's experiences over the last two elections.

REPORT ENDS