

Crawley Borough Council

**Report to Governance Committee
14th November 2016**

Electoral Services Team Report

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – LDS/124

1. Purpose

To inform members of current Electoral Services matters.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee note the report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1 To inform the Committee of current electoral services issues.

4. Securing the ballot: Report of Sir Eric Pickles' review into electoral fraud

4.1 Sir Eric Pickles was asked by the Government last year to consider what changes were needed to make the electoral system more secure. This was particularly in the light of the 2015 Tower Hamlets court judgement that saw the disqualification of the elected mayor for a number of corrupt and illegal practices.

4.2 The report was published in August and includes 50 wide ranging recommendations. The key recommendations include:

- Clamping down on postal vote “harvesting” by political activists.
- Piloting some form of voter identification checks at polling stations.
- Action to tackle links between electoral fraud and immigration fraud.
- Stronger checks and balances against municipal corruption.

4.3 The Electoral Commission published its own recommendations for a system that would require voters to show photo ID at polling stations in December 2015. This was fulfilling a commitment made in the Commission's own review into electoral fraud vulnerabilities, published in January 2014 which concluded that polling station voting in Great Britain remains vulnerable to personation fraud.

4.4 Similar requirements are already in place in Northern Ireland and several other comparable democracies. Voters in Northern Ireland have been required to show photo ID at elections since 2003. The Electoral Commission's proposals would require all voters to show a form of photo ID at polling stations before they can be issued a ballot paper. Voters who do not hold any of the existing forms of identity could apply for a “Voter Card” which would be issued free of charge.

5. Crawley Electoral Register and Annual Canvass

- 5.1 The total number of electors for each month included on the register for Crawley since publication of annual register in December 2015 is set out below.

Dec	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September
75737	76088	76290	76488	76842	77317	78025	79830	79892	79493

- 5.2 The December 2015 register marked the end of the transition to the new system of individual electoral registration. As a comparison the December 2014 register contained 77729 electors.

The total number of individual applications during this period was 18309 of which 7948 were duplicate applications from electors already registered.

- 5.3 The annual canvass of properties started at the beginning of September. The canvass has changed under the new system of individual registration. Each house receives a "household enquiry form". This form lists those currently registered at the address and invites the householder to inform Electoral Services either of any changes, or if there are no changes to be made to the register. Responses can be made either by returning the form in the post, by telephone or on-line.
- 5.4 The responses to the Household Enquiry Form cannot be used directly to amend the register. New electors must be invited to make an individual application and electors who have moved out of an address can only be removed if the information can be corroborated by another source of information held by the council, such as council tax records, or by writing to the elector directly at the address where they need to be removed.
- 5.5 There were 44,387 household Enquiry Forms sent in the initial posting. A reminder was posted to 25,296 non-responding properties on 23 September. Personal visits to the remaining 15,526 non responding properties began on 14 October. Each non-responding property will receive two personal visits and a further reminder.
- 5.6 There have been 4279 potential new electors that have been included in the Household Enquiry Form responses that have not yet registered. Each of these potential electors will receive at least two reminders and a personal visit to encourage them to register to vote.
- 5.7 The new electoral register will be published on 1st December. Boundary changes for West Sussex County Council were due to be included in this register, but as the draft Statutory Instrument giving effect to the changes was laid in parliament on 26 October and has to be laid for 40 sitting days this means that the Statutory Instrument, if accepted by parliament will not come into force until later in December. The Register will then need to be republished in 2017 to reflect these changes.

Overseas electors

- 6.1 The Government is currently consulting on proposals for implementing a system that would allow British Citizens living overseas "votes for life" in British national elections. Under current legislation British citizens who have previously lived in the UK and who have moved abroad and wish to vote in parliamentary elections¹ can apply to register as an overseas elector in the constituency in which they were last

entered in a register of parliamentary electors (before leaving the UK) provided that that entry was in force within 15 years of making an application to register as an overseas elector.

- 6.2 As now, overseas electors will be entitled to register in respect of just one UK address, and the Electoral Registration Officer will need to be satisfied of the applicant's connection with that address. This connection can be one of previous registration or residence.
- 6.3 If the Electoral Registration officer is not able to verify the applicant's connection to the address the applicant will be asked to provide evidence that they were resident at that address. This can be either documentary evidence or an attestation, in which a qualifying elector signs to say the applicant was registered at the relevant address.
- 6.4 Crawley currently has 459 electors resident overseas.

7. Implications

- None

8. Background Papers

[Securing the Ballot – Report of Sir Eric Pickles' review into electoral fraud](#)
[A democracy that works for everyone: British Citizens Overseas](#)

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