

COUNCIL – 13 NOVEMBER 2018

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR T EYNON TO COUNCILLOR N J RUSHTON

“It has been announced that North West Leicestershire is one of the eleven local authorities across England taking part in Voter ID pilots for the 2019 local elections. The pilots are intended to provide further insight into how best to ensure the security of the voting process and reduce the risk of voter fraud.

Of the four models of Voter ID checks:

- photo ID
- photo and non-photo ID
- traditional poll cards
- poll cards with scannable barcodes

I understand that North West Leicestershire is to test making it mandatory for electors to bring their poll cards with them when they vote.

QUESTIONS

- (1) What is the current estimated prevalence of voter fraud in elections in North West Leicestershire?
- (2) How will the post-intervention prevalence of voter fraud be measured?
- (3) What impact if any will there be on the process for postal votes?
- (4) How will North West Leicestershire be communicating this change to electors?
- (5) How will this communication campaign be funded?”

RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR N J RUSHTON

- (1) “There is no evidence of voter fraud in North West Leicestershire. However, in August 2016 Eric Pickles published a report on electoral integrity in general, which set out a number of recommendations, one of which was to introduce a requirement for ID to be shown at polling stations. Before agreeing to this recommendation, the Cabinet Office wanted to satisfy itself of the best model to adopt in order to achieve this. There were 5 pilots carried out last year, but the Electoral Commission asked that these pilots be extended across the country to capture differing demographics and locations. NWLDC was invited to assist with this initiative in order to help shape the future of elections across the country.
- (2) Whilst NWLDC does not have an issue with voter fraud, we were invited to assist in the pilot process to help change the perception of voters in general. The Cabinet Office will carefully analyse all the data collected from each pilot Authority to ascertain the future direction of election management based on the findings.
- (3) A different process is undertaken to verify postal votes and this has been in place since 2007. This process verifies identity by matching the signatures on the postal vote application form with those on the statements which accompany the postal ballot

papers. We use sophisticated software for this matching process followed by a manual check and sign-off by the Deputy Returning Officers. This process will not be affected by being a pilot voter ID authority.

- (4) Each local authority is required to develop a public awareness campaign plan in line with the Government Communications Service guidance. This helps provide assurance to the Cabinet Office that our public awareness campaign will be effective, evaluated and provide good value for money for the taxpayer.

Our Communications Team has the support of the Cabinet Office Communications Team in all campaign planning. They have met once already and will meet fortnightly in the run up to the election in 2019. Cabinet Office have already provided us with example campaign plans and templates and evaluation templates, which we will now use to develop our own campaign.

Our campaign will include social media activity, digital media work, press announcements and printed publicity, and will include regular updates to all parish councils and elected members. Further, a legal order will be made to enable NWLDC to change the wording on its poll cards advising electors that they will need to retain it and take it with them to the polling station in order to vote.

- (5) The Cabinet Office will be funding all aspects of the Voter ID Pilot. In addition, the Communications Team will benefit from any training required to run the campaign successfully”.