

COUNCIL MEETING 23rd MARCH 2017

ITEM 18 – VOTER ID

The Corporate Governance Working Group at its meeting on 20th March was advised that the Cabinet Office had now issued a prospectus inviting expressions of interest from councils to run electoral pilots at local government elections in May 2018 to test the use of ID in polling stations.

The stated objectives of the pilots are:

1. That proposed ID at polling stations policy measures are proportional to the policy objective of reducing the opportunity for electoral fraud.
2. That the proposed ID at polling stations policy measures enhance public confidence in the security of the electoral system.

The pilots will mean that an elector at a polling station will need to present ID as required by the pilot. If they are unable to do this they will be refused a ballot paper and will not be able to vote.

The types of ID that will be tested are photographic (eg a passport, driving licence or other nationally recognised photographic identification) and non –photographic (eg a utility bill, council tax bill, bank statement or letter confirming electoral registration). The prospectus states that the Cabinet Office is not looking to pilot the use of bespoke or purpose made electoral identity cards or voters' biometric data as a means of proving identity.

The process is that councils who wish to take part should submit an expression of interest by Friday 24th March (i.e. the day after this Council meeting). Submitting this is not a binding commitment to take part in the pilots nor a guarantee of selection. The councils who do submit an expression of interest will be involved in the detailed development of the pilots and the evaluation requirements. There will then be a requirement for a formal application with a deadline expected to be in June. Applications will be evaluated by a panel including the Electoral Commission and final decisions will be made by the Minister for the Constitution which will then be embodied in statutory orders.

The prospectus recognises that developing, communicating, managing and evaluating a pilot will be a significant undertaking for councils. The Cabinet Office will provide funding for the net additional costs of piloting.

If the Council is interested in undertaking a pilot then the **following resolution is suggested:**

That the Returning Officer inform the Cabinet Office of the Council's interest in running a pilot and that a further report be submitted to the Annual Council meeting for a decision on whether a formal application be submitted.