

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR and RETURNING OFFICER
TO: COUNCIL
DATE: 26th SEPTEMBER 2019

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FOR INFORMATION
VOTER ID PILOT MAY 2019

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To report for information the outcome of the pilot carried out at the May 2019 local elections.

1. At its meeting on 25th September 2018 the Council agreed to take part in a pilot at the May 2019 Borough and parish and town council elections. The pilot was one of ten held around the country the purpose of which was to test a potential legal requirement on voters to produce ID at polling stations. It was felt that participation in the pilot would help develop local elector understanding of the requirement if it were to be introduced nationally.
2. It was agreed with the Cabinet Office that Pendle's pilot would require electors to produce photographic ID at the polling station. This was that same as in the pilot undertaken by Woking Council who had also undertaken a similar pilot in May 2018. The forms of acceptable photo ID were specified in a statutory Order. Electors who did not have such ID could apply for a free local electoral card from the Council which could then be produced at the polling station. The vast majority of voters produced a passport or photo driving licence.
3. The other pilots were a mix of photographic and other documentation, and poll card requirements.
4. The Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office have both undertaken evaluations of the pilots and these are attached as appendices.
5. It was agreed with the Cabinet Office that in Pendle's case the pilot would also include some measures in respect of postal voting. This took the form of hand delivery of a random selection of postal vote packs and also random sampling of postal voters to ascertain whether any pressure was put on them and their understanding of the process.
6. Whilst this was limited in scale I feel it was a useful engagement exercise with the selected postal voters who generally welcomed the personal contact made with them.

7. The overall turnout in the Borough elections was 37.71% and in the parish and town council elections 37.42%.
8. There were no significant administrative issues with the pilot. Some difficulties were experienced e.g. some later than expected delivery of postal votes, but these were down to factors beyond our control and not the pilot. As always thanks must go to the staff in the Elections Team and throughout the Council and Liberata who played a great part in delivering the election and the pilot.
9. The total cost of the pilot was £79,513. The main elements were publicity and communications (£44,193); additional management and coordination costs including additional temporary part time staffing (£15,035); additional printing and stationery (£6,255); and additional staff training (£9,981). The full amount has been reimbursed by the Cabinet Office.

IMPLICATIONS

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| Policy: | The Council's policy is to have fair and well run elections with electors having the necessary information and support when casting their votes. |
| Financial: | These are as summarised in paragraph nine. |
| Legal: | The pilot was authorised by the Pendle Borough Council (Identification in Polling Stations) Order 2019. |
| Risk Management: | None arising from the report. |
| Health and Safety: | None arising from the report. |
| Sustainability: | None arising from the report. |
| Community Safety: | None arising from the report. |
| Equality and Diversity: | Great attention was given to these considerations and a detailed impact assessment was produced and approved by the Cabinet Office. |

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Electoral Commission evaluation report.
Appendix 2 - Cabinet Office evaluation report

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS - none