

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

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| Meeting: | General Purposes & Licensing Committee |
| Date: | 29 September 2003 |
| Subject: | Electoral Commission Consultations "The Cycle of Local Government Elections in England" and "The minimum age of Voting and Candidacy in the UK", and Pilot Schemes Evaluation Report |
| Key decision: | No |
| Responsible Chief Officer: | Gerald Balabanoff, Borough Solicitor, Electoral Registration Officer |
| Relevant Portfolio Holder: | - |
| Status: | Part 1 |
| Ward: | N/a |
| Enclosures: | Appendix A - EC Executive Summary re Local Government Electoral cycles Appendix B - EC Executive Summary re voting and candidacy ages Appendix C - EC Executive Summary of pilot evaluation report Appendix D - LGIU draft response re electoral cycles Appendix E - Harrow draft response re electoral cycles |

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The Electoral Commission (EC) has been asked by the Government to review the cycle of local elections in England. As it is a matter affecting the democratic process in the borough, the views of the council should be included in the consultation. The closing date for responses is 3rd October 2003. The Electoral Commission will review the responses and other evidence, and publish its recommendations to Government by January 2004.
- 1.2 Two other recently published EC documents respectively deal with minimum age of voting and candidacy, and an evaluation of pilot schemes to date.

2. **Recommendations** (for decision by General Purposes and Licensing Committee)

- 2.1 That the draft replies attached to this report at Appendix E be approved.
- 2.2 That the Committee note that the Electoral Commission is consulting on the ages for voting and candidacy.
- 2.3 That the Committee note that the Electoral Commission is recommending Government that future local elections be all-postal.

REASON: To consider consultations/reports from the Electoral Commission.

3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

3.1 n/a

4. **Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

4.1 n/a

5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

5.1 Increased participation in the democratic process is conducive to strengthening communities.

6. **Background Information and options considered**

6.1 Depending on where they live in England, electors may vote at local government elections between one and four times in each four years.

6.2 The 1998 local government white paper proposed annual elections for all local councils, but this has not progressed any further.

6.3 The attached draft response was produced on the principle of desiring a straightforward system generally understood by the electors.

6.4 The Commission have framed their consultation in 8 questions, and the response is produced in the same format.

6.5 Officers have not formulated a draft response to the Commission's paper regarding voting and candidacy ages. If there is a consensus of view amongst Members, this can be done; or alternatively Members/Groups/Parties may wish to write to the Commission direct. The closing date is 31st October 2003.

6.6 On 11th August 2003, I wrote to all Members with the Executive Summary of the Commission's "The shape of elections to come" evaluation report on pilot schemes, explaining that the Commission was recommending Government that all local elections should be all-postal. This will not apply to the European Parliament and GLA/London Mayor elections on 10th June 2004, which will be by traditional polling station method throughout the London Boroughs and the City Corporation.

7. **Consultation**

7.1 Copies of the elections cycles consultation paper were circulated to Group Leaders on 14 July 2003, the Executive Summary of the pilot evaluation report was circulated to all Members on 11th August.

8. **Finance Observations**

8.1

9. **Legal Observations**

9.1 Incorporated in the report.

10. **Conclusion**

10.1 The Electoral Commission has offered opportunities for consultation. A suggested response to one appears at Appendix. E.

11. **Background Papers**

Electoral Commission documents of which the Executive Summaries are attached.

12. **Author**

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