POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 17 JULY 2023

PART I - DELEGATED

7.   MAY 2023 ELECTIONS REPORT
**   (ADSPH)**

1   Summary

1.1   To provide the Committee with feedback following the introduction of Voter Identification and the use of Modern Polling at the May 2023 elections.

2   Details

2.1   The introduction of the Elections Act 2022 created additional responsibilities on the Council regarding the administration of elections in 2023.

2.2   Electors were required to show photo identification (ID) in order for them to vote in the elections held on 4 May 2023. These were the first elections in Great Britain where this requirement was in place.

2.3   For those voters without suitable photo ID, they could apply for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) prior to polling day.

2.4   The Electoral Commission have released their interim analysis of the changes which provides information about how the new voter ID requirement was implemented and how voters found taking part. They anticipate that their full report will be released in September 2023. The interim analysis can be found on their website here.

Modern Polling

2.5   The Council had previously taken the decision to use Modern Polling to help facilitate the introduction of voter ID. Feedback received from Presiding Officers was positive. They felt that the use of the iPad aided in the process once the staff had got used to using it. We have also received positive feedback from some Agents regarding the use of Modern Polling.

2.6   We are aware of the additional forms that would have been necessary for polling station staff to complete had we not had the use of Modern Polling. It is clear that had we relied on paper for the elections this year it would have been much more complicated for Presiding Officers. The Association for Electoral Administrators (AEA) stated that "these new forms have been added to an already significant amount of documentation Presiding Officers (POs) are required to fill out and return". After the election the AEA reported that many of their members that used paper forms reported that POs felt overwhelmed by the paperwork and the time taken to complete it throughout polling day and at the close of poll.

2.7   Polling Station Inspectors were on hand all day to deal with any issues if they arose, with IT support available at Three Rivers House. Learning from this year, we will ensure that Inspectors have spare chargers with them in future.

2.8   The close of poll went very smoothly with Presiding Officers submitting their Ballot Paper Accounts electronically, meaning that staff at Three Rivers House were able to action these immediately.

2.9 A member of staff from Modern Polling was onsite at Three Rivers House for the day who commented on how efficient and effective the return of ballot boxes was, which is thanks to our Depot and Facilities staff.

Voter ID statistics

2.10 There was a total of 68,236 electorate eligible to vote in person in the election in May 2023. Of that electorate there were 208 people that arrived at the polling station without suitable ID. Of those 208, 138 people later returned with suitable ID and were issued with a ballot paper. Therefore, there were 70 people who applied for but were not issued with a ballot paper. A table with this information can be seen below.

Total number of electors who were eligible to vote in person at the polling stations	68236
Data	Number
Total number of polling station electors who applied for, but at least initially were not issued with, a ballot paper	208
Total number of polling station electors who were not issued with a ballot paper, who later returned with accepted ID and were issued with a ballot paper	138
Number of polling station electors who applied for but were not issued with a ballot paper by close of poll	70
Contextual information	
Total number of electors who were eligible to vote in person at the polling stations	68236
Total number of voters issued with a ballot paper at polling stations	14662
Percentage of electors eliglbe to vote in person at the polling stations who voted	21.5%
Proportions - of those who tried to vote in a polling station	
Percentage that attended the polling station and were able to vote on 4 May	99.5%
Percentage who applied for but were refused a ballot paper by the close of poll	0.5%
Percentage of electors who applied for, but were initially refused, a ballot paper	1.4%
Of the electors initially refused a ballot paper, the percentage who later returned with accepted ID and were issued with a ballot paper	66.3%

2.11

2.12 There is various data that we are not permitted to share publicly but was required as part of our return to central Government. However, we are able to provide ward level data regarding the number of people that were initially turned away, the number that returned and then the total number of electors unable to vote that had requested to do so.

WARD	Total number of polling station electors who applied for, but at least initially were not issued with, a ballot paper	Total number of polling station electors who were not issued with a ballot paper, who later returned with accepted ID and were issued with a ballot paper	Number of polling station electors who applied for but were not issued with a ballot paper by close of poll
Abbots Langley and Bedmond	9	9	0
Carpenders Park	14	9	5
Chorleywood North and Sarratt	23	12	11
Chorleywood South and Maple Cross	22	12	10
Dickinsons	27	23	4
Durrants	8	4	4
Gade Valley	11	7	4
Leavesden	18	14	4
Moor Park and Eastbury	20	11	9
Oxhey Hall and Hayling	30	21	9
Penn and Mill End	5	3	2
Rickmansworth Town	5	3	2
South Oxhey	16	10	6
TOTAL	208	138	70

2.13

Postal votes

2.14   As is usual practice, we pay for a Royal Mail 'sweep' at the end of polling day. This consists of them checking their sorting office and then delivering to us prior to the close of poll, usually approximately 21:45.

2.15   However, we do always receive some postal votes after polling day. This year we received 141 returned envelopes. It should be noted that this may not necessarily equate to the same number of votes as we do not open the envelopes, so we do not know if the required postal vote statement and ballot paper were included or if signatures match.

2.16   It is assumed that of the 141 of late postal votes returned, some will be due to late posting by the voter and some due to Royal Mail postal issues.

2.17   There were several issues with Royal Mail this year which will be raised with their dedicated elections team.

The Count

2.18   This year we changed how we operated the Count. We opted for verifying and counting all 13 district wards at the same time. Due to the space available, the only way this was possible was to have smaller count teams. Feedback on this has generally been positive, although it is noted that because the count teams are smaller, there is a smaller viewing space for observers which can become congested.

2.19   Feedback received from the BBC correspondent at the Count was that it was the best one she had attended.

3   **Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1   Committee is asked to note the report.

4   **Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1   The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

5   **Financial, Legal, Equal Opportunities, Communications and Website, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

5.1   None specific.

6   **Recommendation**

6.1   That the Committee are asked to note the report.

Report prepared by: Kimberley Grout, Associate Director, Strategy, Partnerships and Housing

Data Quality

Data sources: Modern Polling VIDEF report

Data checked by: Kimberley Grout, Associate Director, Strategy, Partnerships and Housing

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	