



Constitution Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Voter ID

Wednesday 15 November 2023

10.20 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Drake (The Chair); Lord Anderson of Ipswich; Baroness Andrews; Baroness Finn; Lord Mancroft; Lord Strathclyde; Baroness Suttie; Lord Thomas of Gresford.

Evidence Session No. 3

Heard in Public

Questions 31 - 49

Witnesses

I: Graham Farrant, Chief Executive, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council; Cleland Sneddon, Chief Executive, South Lanarkshire Council; Martha Matheou, Head of Electoral Services, London Borough of Sutton.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is a corrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.

Examination of witnesses

Graham Farrant, Cleland Sneddon and Martha Matheou.

Q31 **The Chair:** Good morning, everyone. The Constitution Committee is taking evidence in its inquiry into voter ID requirements in elections. Today we are taking evidence from: Graham Farrant, chief executive of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council; Cleland Sneddon, chief executive of South Lanarkshire Council; and Martha Matheou, head of electoral services at the London Borough of Sutton, who was a member of the expert advisory panel on the Elections Act.

Welcome. Thank you very much indeed. To open with a broad question, did you face any challenges in implementing the voter ID policy at the May 2023 elections? If so, what were the challenges? Mr Sneddon, in your case, you can answer about the parliamentary by-election.

Graham Farrant: There are always challenges in running elections, because it is something you do on an occasional basis. It is not a continual service, so there are challenges with finding staff, et cetera.

Voter ID just added another layer of difficulty or challenge. There are two or three main challenges. We are struggling more each year to get the right number of poll clerks and presiding officers in our polling stations anyway, and voter ID added a reason for people not to want to do it, because it added another layer of complexity.

We have found that the population of electoral staff is getting older. We are losing more than we are gaining at the bottom end. Covid also had an impact. Off the back of Covid, people said, "I am not sure I want to be sat in a room for 16 hours with people coming and going and breathing all over me".

Voter ID was another reason. Certainly for presiding officers, we found that a number of them looked at the requirements and said, "No, it is not for me". A number of them had the training and then decided they did not want to do it. It is not necessarily the challenge of voter ID; it is another layer in the requirements of the job. That was a challenge for us.

In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, it got to the point where we were only able to run our election with full staffing because we were able to borrow staff from our neighbouring council, Dorset Council, because it did not have local elections on the same day. It will give us more of a challenge when we have a general election or a police and crime commissioner election, which goes across the whole area. Staffing was a challenge.

There were a few challenges with forms of ID and the knowledge and awareness. Knowing what you have to bring is clearly a challenge for everybody. Most people turned up at the polling station with voter ID in their hand and they were very good about it, but some had not picked up the requirement and were not used to it. There was a bit of a mixed

picture. It did not destroy the election. It just added another layer of challenge to running an election.

From my point of view, because this was the first time it was required and there had been no piloting or anything in our area, it was a big step to go from no voter ID requirements to, "You have to have it; otherwise you cannot vote". There were ways we could have ameliorated that. We could have reduced the challenge, for example by, for the first year or two, asking everybody to bring photo ID but then handing them a certificate form to complete if they did not have photo ID and allowing them to vote. We went straight to mandation, which was quite a cliff edge for a number of people.

Those were the challenges, from my point of view: the logistical challenge, the challenge of people just not wanting to do something else on elections,; and the challenge of staffing.

The Chair: Later on in our questions we want to interrogate this issue about the cumulative impact of the total stress on the electoral system.

You mentioned, and it has been mentioned by one of your colleagues before, that you had to borrow staff from Dorset. You will not be able to do that in a general election. In your particular case, to give us a real practical sense, how are you going to deal with it?

Graham Farrant: To be frank, we are looking at ways of incentivising people to do election duties. It is not mandatory, but, at the end of the day, as the chief executive of the council and the returning officer, I may well be directing some people that I need their support for this.

The rates of pay for election day are not great. At BCP Council, we have a process whereby we ask people to take leave from the council in order to do election duty, and then they get paid for election duty. Most councils do not require their staff to take leave. We are reviewing our policy. We may well not require them to take leave so that it is an additional payment.

There are a number of mechanisms we will use. We will encourage people. We have to get more young people involved in the election. When I started in local government, which was many decades ago, in the first year I was at Westminster City Council, people said, "You should go and do the election". It was very much encouraged. We do not have that philosophy now. We need to reintroduce some of that. We need to encourage people to do it and let them see the excitement of it.

We will have to use as many mechanisms as we can to get more staff, because, at a general election, Dorset Council will have the same election day as we will, as will everywhere else in the country.

The Chair: What is your fail-safe contingency, if you do not get the volunteers?

Graham Farrant: It is to use instruction and to mandate people to do it.

The Chair: Martha, would you like to give us the benefit of your views on and your experience of voter ID?

Martha Matheou: London did not have elections in 2023, but I helped City of York Council run its elections. One of the issues for administrators was the timing and the fact we were not prepared. We did not understand the portal, because we had not seen it.

Sutton was a private beta site, because I am on the expert panel and I benefited from being able to understand and help shape how administrators would work using the portal. At one of the branches in London, I took screenshots and gave a presentation in December. The whole of London's administration team would not have known what that portal looked like.

The issue we had in implementing was about training the core team to understand it. For documentary evidence, if the journey is quick for voter ID, it all passes really quickly, because the front end is really easy to implement. You had to administer it while you are training staff, it has gone live and people are saying, "This is another barrier. Having to bring in voter ID means I cannot vote". There are lots of public questions. We have not educated the public. They do not know what is required of them.

At the time of introduction, it was hard to implement, because it seemed scarier than it actually was. In York, we calmly suggested to the presiding officer that this was another part of the process of walking into a polling station, being asked for your name and address and showing your photo ID. Most people turned up and accepted that there was a requirement to show photo ID.

We had a couple of issues, but none that I can report back as a disaster. They were customer-facing or customer care situations in polling stations. York struggled with staff. It had to call on staff from other areas surrounding them. There was an hour-and-a-half distance between where some polling stations were and the neighbouring council that could offer that help. We did struggle with staffing.

The one thing I did take away from York—in my head, I had a whole year to prepare for voter ID, because in London it was going to come in for the 2024 election—is that they started their engagement and communication plan started in January. They did leaflet drops to all households, where they could, with poll cards. They had signposts and hoardings everywhere: "To vote, you have to take your voter ID". That helped them a great deal. On the day, that comms plan worked so efficiently that we only had about 20 or 30 queries about polling station mishaps.

The Chair: Mr Sneddon, you have had the advantage—I do not know whether you would call it an advantage—of dealing with a by-election and a recall petition in Rutherglen. You have submitted written evidence, which we have read, but maybe you can give us your particular view, given that you were handling voter ID in those contexts.

Cleland Sneddon: First, Chair, I would like to thank my colleagues down south, because all the returning officers in Scotland and their teams were given the opportunity to go down and observe a number of events. That was very helpful for us. It was somewhat different for us in terms of the petition process, because our role changes from promoting participation to raising awareness. It is a very fine line. There were a lot of high emotions around the recall petition.

Reflecting on the comments from Graham and Martha, we have similar views on the cumulative effect of voter ID on elections. For us, if I take the petition process first of all, the process went off largely without any particular drama. People predominantly came ready and aware of the requirement and were able to produce voter ID. Only six people in a six-week-long petition process turned up without voter ID. It was difficult to track, but we know that two of those definitely came back in and voted. Across six weeks with different shift patterns for staff, et cetera, it was difficult to track. The process for the petition went off fairly successfully.

One reflection on the by-election is that in Scotland the general election has a requirement for photographic ID. Our local authority and Holyrood elections do not. We also have a different method of voting, single transferable vote. We do see some confusion among the voters who turn up. As much as poll staff will try to outline the requirements, inevitably it just adds to the confusion, particularly for some of the older voters in attendance.

I would associate myself with all the comments from my colleagues, but, on that staffing issue, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure we have appropriate staffing. When we have a general election, where you are not able to move staff from different areas or provide some mutual aid, that is going to be a challenge. All of the mechanisms that Graham outlined are areas we are looking at.

I will give you one piece of anecdotal feedback. We had somewhere in the region of 10% call-offs after the appointment of staff to elections, some of which came after the training. Some of the anecdotal comments that came back were about staff feeling like their role was changing from facilitating people to vote, which was the traditional role of a polling clerk or a presiding officer, to one where you are a gatekeeper who is deciding whether someone can vote. Although there was no significant drama in delivering the by-election, the fear of that challenge inevitably led to some people withdrawing.

The final point I want to make is about photographic ID. We need to make sure we do not overestimate the problem. In administrative terms it was relatively straightforward, notwithstanding the comments we have made. We need to make sure we do not make it a fairly big barrier that would encourage staff to be more nervous about the role. We would encourage that. I hope that is helpful.

The Chair: That is helpful. We will pick up some of those points, such as staff attitude and the shift from facilitator to gatekeeper, in subsequent

questions. They are important points.

In the by-election, you had two advantages that you may not get in a general election. First, the scale was lower in terms of the turnout. Secondly, you had so much Scottish and UK press attention, which in a sense was a real boost to the awareness campaign. You will not necessarily have those in a general election.

Cleland Sneddon: The Electoral Commission provided a very effective awareness-raising campaign down in England for the local government elections. We did not benefit directly from that, but we were able to share a lot of materials with the Electoral Commission in Scotland. We ran our own awareness campaigns. The public attention was so heightened around the petition process leading into quite a high-profile by-election that the awareness-raising was done for us.

One reflection is that the turnout for this by-election was lower than expected. In trying to stitch together a number of reasons, I would think that photographic ID had one of the lowest impacts. There was an impact from voter fatigue. You had the run-in to the petition: there was a six-week-long petition process and then the parties went immediately into campaign mode leading up to the by-election. By the time polling day came, you could not walk down Rutherglen Main Street without a TV camera and a microphone being put under your nose and being solicited for your views.

It was a terrible day. It was the worst weather we had seen for a long period of time. The turnout was 37% and change. The snap election of 2019 was at 66% or thereabouts. When comparing those, the impact of voter ID is one of the more junior factors.

Q32 **Baroness Suttie:** I have a question that is particularly for Mr Sneddon and Ms Matheou, as you are from London and Scotland, which have not had the opportunity, apart from in the by-election, to implement voter ID. You have already touched on some of the issues, but what will be the particular and greatest challenges for Scotland, London and other areas that have not yet implemented the voter ID policy?

Cleland Sneddon: The key point for us is the logistics around this. When we are doing a general election, we will have to ensure we have appropriate resource in place. We have rehearsed the points around staffing. I will not go into that in much more detail. There are some other logistics issues as well.

We need to substantially improve the performance of the contractors that support the elections process, particularly the printers. There have been a number of electoral events over the last three or four years where the failure of some of the subcontractors has applied significant pressure to election teams. We need to deal with that now.

As the pressure goes on to public sector organisations and there are reduced levels of services, a lot of polling places may no longer be available to us. We need to think about how we accommodate that

without impacting inappropriately and to a different level on education provision. There are fewer community halls and leisure centres, for example, that might be available to us.

On the awareness issue, we need to do something with a Scotland-wide focus. We will not have the benefit of all the high-profile stuff around the by-election. We need to ensure everyone is aware of that.

I am buoyed by the Electoral Commission's research. The vast majority of people do have access to photographic ID. They have been able to identify the segments of the voting population who require additional assistance. They tend to correlate with the groups we would tend to target.

Those are the types of arrangements that we need to put in place. It is a fairly significant logistics exercise to put all the details together. Our ability to turn around a snap election is significantly lower than it was when we did it in 2019. If we had a six-week lead-in right now, I would fear for the delivery of the election. We would do it. We would make it happen, but it certainly would not be easy.

Martha Matheou: London face a big challenge with the GLA elections—there are three separate ballot papers—in relation to understanding how you vote in each.

One of the issues is the demographics in London. We have not drilled down—this is what we will start doing now—to understand who needs a voter authority certificate. We have to do some work. There are many authorities where there are demographics that we know do not have voter ID. One of the challenges is to reach out to all those demographics and work out, borough by borough and ward by ward, how we can support those individuals.

What is interesting about demographics is that we have the 2021 census to go by. That is what we will work towards. We know our own areas. The Electoral Commission has great resources, which we have tapped into. Without it, it would cost a lot to do this and we would not be able to achieve what we have. It has done Mencap; it has done disability resources. All of these have been put on our websites. It has partnered with organisations and charities, and reached out to them and explained it to headquarters, so that they can reach out to the local branches. This has been really helpful.

One of the issues for polling day is that, if there were a snap election and we had a combination, in London you would be looking at four ballot boxes and four different papers. This would be a complicated day for those who come to vote.

There is this phrase about us employing volunteers. As an administrator who has been working in elections since 1996, I do not see my presiding officers as volunteers. They are entering a contract with me to run that polling station, whether it is a presiding officer or poll clerk, and to do the

duties I expect them to run, not just voluntarily going out for the day and spending 16 hours in a polling station.

The paperwork for voter ID is an additional burden to the presiding officers. It is not just about the gatekeeper situation. It is about all the other documents they have to fill in, along with all the documents we already give them to fill in.

One of the other issues we have is the review of the maximum recovery amounts we receive for elections. There is a big review taking place at the same time as all these additional duties for staff at the polling station. If they are cut, if we see the staff as volunteers and if we are going to pay them minimum wage, expecting them to turn people away and to have a legal responsibility for our elections on election day, this will cause a problem. It is the wrong message to give to the people you are employing.

One of the things the GLA is supporting us with is No Vote, No Voice. In London, we were not able to tap into the communications for the 2023 elections, because they were all about the May 2023 elections. The GLA resources really helped us, because we could send the generic versions about making sure people have voter ID and get those messages across. Having these different partners working with us is very supportive to us as administrators.

Baroness Suttie: In an ideal world, how long do you need to have an effective communications plan?

Martha Matheou: My own plan at the moment for our communication engagements is to look at our demographics, target the areas and target what needs to happen within those areas. We have just done the annual canvass. Where we are doing household canvassing, we have a generic leaflet in that and then have specific leaflets that cater for your or someone else's needs by targeting those demographics within our area.

Graham Farrant: I wonder whether I could just add to that. My experience was that the Electoral Commission's campaigning started some weeks or months before the election. It is very difficult to engage with people about their voter requirements until the election has been called and they have seen some leaflets. They are then very near the deadline for applying for a voter authority certificate, if they do not have anything.

I am an interested party. I would notice if there were an advert or if I had seen anything. I did not see anything for months before. I was getting worried about the lack of communication. In the run-up to the election itself, the campaigning was much stronger. I noticed things, and therefore I think we got the message across to those who were interested. Most people were interested on the day they were going out to vote.

That is my challenge to implementing it as a mandatory requirement in the first year. Many people do not think about their voting patterns. Politicians would like to think that we are constantly thinking about the next election, but my experience of most members of the public is that they think about voting when they can. Therefore, the voter ID requirement came a bit late. It is very difficult to know how you would engage with them six weeks before an election when we do not even know who the candidates are. They are not thinking about the election. The timing is a critical issue for us when it comes to the depth of the campaign.

Q33 Lord Strathclyde: Thank you very much for coming along and giving your evidence. What you have been saying is very clear. I was particularly impressed by what Mr Sneddon said. He said we should not overstate the problem. That is right. One of the temptations of a committee such as this is to look at the problems and make more of them than there actually are.

At the same time, a committee such as ours is useful in adding a little bit of influence to the Government to try to change glitches where they may or may not exist. I assume you have been talking directly to the Government or through your representative bodies or through the Electoral Commission to try to get things improved.

The key question I want to ask is about the awareness of the ID requirement—you have answered that to some extent—and the existence of the voter authority certificate. To what extent is that recognition divided by the demographics you have in your own areas?

Graham Farrant: The point about not overstating the critical nature of the requirement for voter ID is a key one.

We had a debate about this at our full council meeting last week. My councillors believed that there was a significant reduction in turnout as a result of the voter ID requirement. Our figures for the local election in 2023 were about 3% down from 2019. When you look ward by ward, there are very big variations. With an overall turnout of around 30%, we saw some at 44% and some at 23%. There were real variations in the localities.

The critical point is that there were 75 electors who were turned away for not having voter ID and did not return. 394 electors turned up and spoilt their ballot papers. I like to put it in context. 75 were not able to vote because of a lack of ID. Nearly 400 spoilt the ballot paper and therefore their paper did not count.

Lord Strathclyde: They had turned up with their ID.

Graham Farrant: Yes, having gone through that process. That helps to put it in perspective. It is a requirement. Interestingly, lots of people who have lived in other countries have come to previous elections fully expecting to have to provide photo ID, because that was their

experience. I would not want to overstate the nature of the issue on the day.

The thing I do not know, because I cannot see, is how many people did not come out, because they did not have voter ID. That is what the councillors were talking about. They were telling stories about how they knocked on people's doors to get them out to vote and then it turned out that they did not have suitable voter ID.

That goes back to this issue about how, on the day, there is not really a process by which you can get somebody an emergency ID. You are then into proxy votes and others sorts of mechanisms, which are very complicated to explain and, in most households, probably result in people just not bothering to vote. That was the issue about not making too much of it.

My worry with the voter authority certificate—this will sound wrong, but this is the way people have described it to me—is that it is a long process to go through “just to be able to vote”. I believe in the democratic process and that people should vote, but their phrase is “just to be able to vote”. It feels like a process you have to go through just to vote. That feels a bit difficult for many people to bother to do a couple of weeks before your vote is required. It is about the context and the timing.

My argument would be that we should loosen the requirements on photo ID and enable more photo ID to be valid. Lots of people turned up with NHS photo ID. Lots of people working in the National Health Service turned up with their work photo ID and tried to use that. Public sector photo ID is generally recognisable in the area in which you are doing the election. Many people work for a public sector body. They will recognise the photo ID used by the council, the NHS, the police, the fire service or whatever.

My suggestion would be to open up the means of proving who you are through photo ID. That would be much more helpful than a standalone process to get a voter authority certificate “just to be able to vote”, if that is helpful.

The Chair: We are coming on to the photo ID issue. We will elaborate on that.

Cleland Sneddon: I will reflect separately about the petitions process and the by-election. Throughout the six weeks of the petition process, as I mentioned, only six people had been turned away on their first visit to vote. The only real angst that was reported to me was in one petition place, where a gentleman decided to give his views quite lengthily to the petition staff about why he was being required to do this. He did not berate them; he berated the process. After 10 minutes, he fished into his pocket and pulled out his bus pass, explaining to the staff that he was trying to make a point of principle.

The figures from the election reflect the ones Graham mentioned. We had 299 people who at their first visit to the polling place did not have an appropriate photographic ID with them. Of those, 199 of those returned; 100 people did not return to exercise their right to vote, but, as I say, it was a filthy day in terms of the weather. Some of that would have an impact.

I would probably differ from Graham's position about what is accepted. I know there is potentially another question about that, but the requirement is for the photographic ID to be formally issued. There was some commentary from people: "I work for the NHS and I have a photographic NHS ID". There are something in the region of 14 separate boards in Scotland—not all of them are geographic; some of them are special boards—that have different IDs, to some extent. Even some of the subsections and services they run have separate IDs. There is also the police and various others.

It would be quite difficult to define a single list of acceptable public sector ID, for the staff to know what it looks like to be able to judge it, and to keep it current. There are always changes in public sector bodies, et cetera. I would advocate that we keep it as simple as possible. The Electoral Commission's research has demonstrated that most people have access to that.

Coming to Lord Strathclyde's final point about the VAC process, again, just for the committee's awareness, the electoral registration officer role is separate in Scotland. It is vested in a separate individual and a separate body. The feedback from them is that the uptake of VACs was not very significant, but it required some changes to their systems. It required changes to the paperwork and documentation they were producing, et cetera.

Again, that is just an added complexity and burden to them. That is unavoidable, because there will always be someone, particularly in those segments of the population that are less likely to have a formal photographic ID, who we need to support in order to help them exercise their electoral mandate.

Martha Matheou: From an administrator's point of view, in order to register you have to provide your national insurance number and be verified by DWP. You pass or fail. You have to give residency evidence to us in order to register. Once you are registered, you are able to vote. The VAC process repeats that process. You have to provide me with your full name, address and national insurance number for me to be able to produce that VAC.

We use an agency to verify the national insurance numbers. If they fail, everyone is required to give documentary evidence to prove their identity. That person could go through the same process twice in a couple of months, if they are a new elector, or over and over if they move from borough to borough and move addresses. For the voter, it becomes quite tiresome. You are providing me with the same information constantly.

If you have an NI number and you pass straightaway, the VAC process is very simple. It is not a burden to the voter. Some people have commented that they find it hard to upload their photo. They go to the paper application and send a passport-sized photo to us. We have not had any real complaints in Sutton and during the private beta about that particular issue.

My issue with the VAC itself is about the deadline to get these to people being nearer to the election. I appreciate that I can run temporary VACs in the office, if we do not think—

Lord Strathclyde: On that, does the deadline being closer to polling day give all of you a problem?

Martha Matheou: Yes. If they are going to apply, you want to get that to them.

Graham Farrant: There is an issue about elections. We assume that Royal Mail has the capacity it used to have 20 or 30 years ago, but it does not have that anymore. There are other challenges alongside the election system. The tighter you make it, the more difficult it is to guarantee something. The last thing you want is somebody applying on time but not receiving it through the post. There are issues about capacity in the whole of the system.

Lord Strathclyde: Postal votes do not need the same ID. Do you try to encourage people to do postal votes rather than apply for a VAC?

Martha Matheou: From 31 October, they need to provide their national insurance number in order to be verified. This is the third process. You can choose to do the VAC or you have a postal vote, but it is the same process. You might be rejected, because you are not verified.

For me, the other problem with the VAC is that it is a bit of A4 paper. It does not fit in my wallet. I have a nice, good and sturdy purse, but it does not fit in my wallet. It is supposed to last for 10 years. Paper is not going to last folded up and stuck in your pocket or however it is going to be, with rainy days, for 10 years.

My other worry from the admin level is about how many times they will have to reapply for this. We came into the process thinking that it would be a card. I understand the politics and the financial implications of why it went to paper—I do not object to that—but it does mean that people will have to reapply for them, because they have lost them or because they are made of paper.

Cleland Sneddon: Yes, we have seen a substantial increase in the percentage of people registering for a postal vote and returning them, et cetera. The point I would make is that it does not reduce the work. It increases the work for election teams, because you have all the process about receipting and preparing postal votes from the point at which postal votes are issued. You then have all the same arrangements around

your count. You are actually increasing the demand on the election team rather than reducing it.

None the less, we try to encourage participation in whatever way someone can legitimately exercise their vote. I think I speak for every returning officer when I say that it does pain us when we go through the adjudication of ballots and the verification of postal votes and we are unable to accept a vote. It does grind.

Q34 **The Chair:** On the point about postal voting going up—I did ask this question in a previous session—are you seeing evidence, or maybe shoots, of a substitution effect? Is voter ID resulting in an increase in demand for postal voting or is the increase in demand for postal voting coming anyway?

Graham Farrant: My sense is that we think there has been an increase triggered as a result of the voter ID requirements coming in, but it is difficult to prove. There has been an annual increase in postal voting over the last decade or so. Every year, the numbers go up. Covid had an impact. In our elections in early 2023, people said, "I am not confident going out", and therefore they went for a postal vote.

There is a mix of reasons, but we definitely saw an increase in postal voting requirements in early 2023. It is difficult to ascribe that increase to the voter ID requirements being the key.

The Chair: It is one to look at. People can be quite enterprising in getting around barriers, can they not? It is in the nature of human beings.

Martha Matheou: We have been recording the increase. It seems to be the same as it usually is. People are not applying for postal votes more than they usually would.

The thing with the May elections is that people are away. The increase in applications during an election period is because there is a holiday season around then. That is why the spike happens. It is not necessarily because they do not have a form of voter ID. That is really important. The May elections are traditionally around the bank holiday. People do go away. That is the increase in our postal vote applications during election time.

The Chair: Baroness Andrews, you have been patiently waiting with your supplementary.

Q35 **Baroness Andrews:** It is very interesting, Chair, so I am very happy to have waited. Good morning, colleagues. I am sorry not to be with you in person. It has been very interesting indeed. In light of what you have been saying, last week we were putting questions to other colleagues about how you reach the people who have already been identified as hard to reach by all the research.

We are talking about the unemployed; people who rent; young people; and a degree of ethnic minority absence. Martha, you talked about

reaching into households. Mr Farrant, you talked about the demographics of different boroughs and how variable they are. Martha also talked about how important the partnerships are that have already been established, for instance with disability agencies, and the importance of national insurance identification.

The people who are hard to reach might not be reached by any of those various criteria. It sounds as if you know, because of the demographics, where these clusters of people might be. The question is simply this: can you do anything else? Could you use organisations such as Generation Rent or the *Big Issue* to penetrate into these communities, which are much more inchoate and do not have any formal connection with an organisation? They may not have national insurance records.

Cleland Sneddon: It is an important point. Again, from the Electoral Commission's research, when they looked at the segments of the population they looked at those least likely to have photographic identification. There were two large groups within that: those who are currently unemployed and those with low educational attainment or low literacy. They concluded, probably correctly, although I have an additional point to make, that the messaging in a mass campaign will probably penetrate those groups if it is properly crafted and delivered.

The point I would make—this is maybe a reflection on our by-election—is about one aspect of the national messaging that could be deployed in a full general election. Very close to poll date, maybe in the weeks before, there should be some televisual representation of somebody going into a polling place. It could be almost like a mini-walkthrough. It would be a small advert that is all very visual, which shows someone showing a range of different photographic identification. That should be played on national TV. That would really penetrate that particular group.

There are a whole bunch of smaller segments. It will be different for different areas because of the different demographic make-up and ethnicity, et cetera, in different parts of the UK. If I take the example of the Traveller and Gypsy community, my own authority has extremely good relationships with that community, and we do an awful lot of work with that community. We can therefore use these relationships and connections to share information about using their voter rights.

For younger people, in previous elections, particularly for young people in Scottish elections where the threshold is lower, we deployed age banding for young people who would be facing their first electoral event and deployed some materials directly into schools for those young people who would qualify in terms of age.

Through our youth, community and family learning service, we have quite extensive connections into a whole range of youth groups and organisations that represent older young people, the 18 to 24 year-olds.

Rather than giving you a long list of how we would do it for each community, the point I would make is that each returning officer for their respective constituency should be thinking about the segments within

their population that might be furthest away from using their voter mandate and trying to think about bespoke arrangements that allow you to connect with them.

I would ally that to whole-UK TV advert-type messaging. It should go out a week or two weeks before. There is no point doing it months before an electoral event. Make it short and sharp and show it. That will help penetrate these larger groups that might have lower literacy levels and are unlikely to pick up a leaflet on that basis. I hope that is helpful.

Baroness Andrews: That is very helpful.

Graham Farrant: To add to that from my perspective, one of the core roles of local government is to work with local communities and particularly to reach those harder-to-reach groups. We have a lot of mechanisms available to us. One of the things we tried to implement before the local elections was using all those mechanisms to reach out to those groups to give them awareness of the requirements for voter ID.

To give you some examples, we used our housing and homelessness outreach officers, because they were working in those areas of the community that are most likely to become homeless and those people who are the most in housing need. We gave them messages to put out.

We talked to our youth groups, schools and colleges. Faith leaders were very important for us. We tried to get the message out through faith leaders. One of the messages we had back was that nobody really wants to hear from the electoral registration team; it is not their bag. If their faith leader or their youth leader is saying something about voter ID, they would listen to those messages. We had to try to sculpt the messages and get buy-in from a number of people who would not normally have anything to do with the election in order to get the messaging out. We had to work quite hard on different levels of messaging.

The Electoral Commission's advertising campaign, which was on bus shelters and buses, et cetera, also helped to get some more outreach.

This is where the councillors were really clear in their debate. They felt that those who were in the highest levels of deprivation still did not necessarily hear those messages. They might have heard them from some services, but they still did not take them on board and therefore understand that the requirements for voting had changed. The balance for me is about how often you have to tell people to do this before they will eventually understand that it is a core part of the process and not an add-on.

We tried to use every mechanism we could. We were relatively successful because of the relatively low number of turn-aways at the polling station. As I say, we do not know who did not turn up on the day specifically because of it. The numbers do not demonstrate that there was a major

problem, but our councillors believe it was probably more significant than the numbers would show.

Martha Matheou: Outreach is really important. Electoral administrators' offices do not have the staff to be able to go out, meet and greet and inform people.

One of the other reasons is that May will be the first time London will have voter ID, but we also have the tranche 2 changes to postal votes and overseas votes and all these other things in to learn. The offices are rather busy.

I also have a group of the Sutton Housing Partnership, Citizens Advice and all the people who we think can locally influence the hard-to-reach residents in Sutton and all across London. We have one meeting with them and we provide them with the tools, whether they are stolen from the Electoral Commission or we make our own designs that become a little bit more localised. That is key.

We keep repeating that process, communicating with groups, asking how it is going, getting feedback and making sure we evaluate how we are acting and the reactions of electors. If we do not do any performance indicators, it is just saying to somebody, "You need voter ID". It is important that they feed back and say, "People did not understand this leaflet. Can you do this?" It is important to listen, change and evolve as we go forward.

The Chair: Just before we leave this question, very quickly, the Electoral Commission is in favour of moving the deadline for voter authority certificates closer to polling day. When we heard from Peter Stanyon of the AEA—I do not want to put words in his mouth; his evidence will speak for itself—he was a little bit more reticent, asking how we would get these certificates to people at such short notice; he suggested that the portal on VAC needs to improve. Just briefly, where are you at the moment in that balance between leaving the date where it is and bringing it forward?

Graham Farrant: I would bring it as close to election day as possible, so long as we have a reliable system of distribution. The greatest concern is somebody who applies at the last minute, and it does not arrive because of factors that are outside of the control of the direct electoral system.

Martha Matheou: We are not quite ready, as administrators, to bring it nearer to election day. With all the other issues, such as the postal vote deadline changing and all the other tranche 2 measures, this will just be breaking point for administrators three to four days before the election.

I was speaking to a colleague in Cornwall from the expert panel. It can take up to an hour to get from their local authority, where they might be having the temporary VACs produced, to the polling station, for example. They asked how that elector would receive that if it was so close to

election day. I am not saying no for ever, but we are not quite ready at this stage to make these changes. We need to bed it in.

Cleland Sneddon: As I mentioned earlier, this is probably more a question for the electoral registration officer in my constituency. I would probably defer to the AEA's comments.

The Chair: We have touched on this, but we are now going on to the issue of expanding or not expanding the accepted forms of ID. Mr Sneddon, I know you have given us a view on this in your written evidence.

Q36 **Lord Mancroft:** By all means say that you have answered it, because we have touched on it. Would an expanded list of forms of ID help improve the accessibility of voting? Is there a further argument for accepting digital forms of ID? On the other hand, is there an argument for reducing a list of accepted forms of ID? We have touched on this, but I wanted to know whether there was anything further you would like to add to that.

Mr Sneddon, I noted in your evidence you felt that it would be difficult to define and maintain a list of workplace photographic identification. I do not know whether you want to add anything to that. I would have thought that would not be very difficult to do, but you would know more than I do about that. Maybe you could explain that a little bit to us.

Cleland Sneddon: I will try not to repeat comments from earlier. My own view is that the list of photographic ID is probably about correct. It is always worth continually reviewing it. A handful of comments—I mean fewer than 10—were shared with colleagues in polling stations from people from public bodies, predominantly organisations such as the NHS and Police Scotland.

I mentioned keeping it simple for polling staff. In Scotland, as I mentioned, there are 14 separate NHS boards. They are not all geographically based. It is not a single ID where all you are changing is the area they represent. There are special boards as well. Some of those photographic IDs vary because of the different services that work within those particular boards.

You then have to multiply that across the whole range of public bodies. I did see a figure a few months back; it has fallen out of my head. There are something like 140 public bodies working to the Scottish Government that are active in Scotland.

My point was that it would be very difficult to have a visual representation of each of those bodies' photographic IDs. One NHS board could have multiple versions of their ID. It would be very difficult to keep that list active. It would create some difficulties for polling staff and significantly add to their burden.

I would go so far as to say the employees within those organisations are likely to have other forms of acceptable photographic ID. You are not

resolving a problem by adding that. You are making things more convenient for them but adding a burden for polling staff.

I would make one further reflection. Ultimately, turnout in the by-election was relatively low. That will not be the case for future electoral events. I did take the action of reducing the number of stations down to 800. Where we had more than three polling stations in a polling place, I deployed an additional information officer, who was able to engage with voters coming in and make sure they were reminded of the need for voter identification and were ready to vote when they came through, just to accelerate the throughput. Those things add cost to the election, but for higher-turnout electoral events they are sensible suggestions for the type of things we could deploy.

As to reducing it—I am going to contradict myself—the list is probably about right. If you reduce it, you are potentially creating further barriers to people voting. I am a bit like the three bears: we do not need more or less; it is just right.

Graham Farrant: I must admit that I would take a slightly different position. My local situation is probably different. In Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, there is one council, two hospitals that serve it in a single hospital trust and a single integrated care board. My sense is that it would be very easy for my polling station staff to identify local NHS employment, local authority employment or police employment.

My sense is that it depends where we are coming from. Are we trying to restrict people's voting or are we trying to enable it as far as possible? Are we just looking for clear evidence that this is not the person? The question and the challenge is whether people are going to forge photo ID simply to vote. What is the evidence on electoral fraud? How widespread is it?

I want to encourage and enable as many people to vote as possible. Therefore, I would go with a much wider allowance of photo ID. I would also find a way of allowing digital forms. Young people do not carry purses and wallets in the same way. They may not have photo ID with them, but they have their phones with them. Would a photograph of a driving licence be adequate? Maybe somebody might go on Photoshop and forge it to change it, but that is not going to be significant.

My own sense is that I would allow a wider variety. The one question would be whether the returning officer for an area could have local discretion about enabling voter ID of different classes to be used. I would put that out there as a question to Government about whether we could release some freedoms locally to allow other forms of ID.

Lord Mancroft: Do you currently have discretion?

Graham Farrant: No. We have discretion about how we train our staff to implement it. In my case, we were training staff to look for clear evidence of forgery in order to exclude, as opposed to, "If it looks at all doubtful,

do not allow it". We were trying to encourage people to enable voters to vote. That was our training. You could have been very hard. It may not have had a different outcome, but we could have trained people with a different approach. We were trying to encourage the staff to enable voters to vote wherever possible. We do not have discretion, but the rules are implemented with different degrees of severity.

Martha Matheou: There are a couple of things that worry me about the expansion. There is not enough data—we have only gone through it once—to understand which ID people actually hold. Until this becomes business as usual for electoral administrators, it is very difficult to say, "Let us add more".

At the polling station, if you are not familiar with all this identification, before you are seeing whether that is a valid identity, you will be scrolling down pages to see whether a type of ID is on the list and you can accept it. As we said, staff only work that one day. As much as I hope they read all the documents that I give them and take it as bedtime reading, I expect that on the day some people do have to refer to the notes we give them on the table.

In the modern world, it is surprising that we have not looked at digital ID. At the same time, we need to hold back. The idea of this is to look at fraud and to make sure the person standing in front of you can be identified through a legal document they are presenting to you. At the moment, there are lots of things that could happen with digital ID, including hacking. You do not know whether the ID is real. There are clever people out there. I do not know enough to say whether that would be a valuable addition to voter ID.

We are introducing this form of voter ID. We need to let it settle, see what people have and concentrate on the people who do not have ID. We are focusing very much on the ID that we know the majority of people already hold.

Q37 **Lord Anderson of Ipswich:** Mr Farrant, you spoke up for being quite broad-minded about the sorts of identification that ought to be permitted. You mentioned the NHS and the police. Would you contemplate that this should be extended, for example, to photo ID from private sector workplaces? Would it only be for the public sector?

Graham Farrant: I would consider that depending on the scale of the employer. JP Morgan has 4,500 people in the Bournemouth area. It would be relatively easy to use that. One person turned up at our polling station with his gun licence and spoke about how difficult it was to get a gun licence: "Do you not know the hurdles I have to go through to get that?" When we would not allow him to use it, he pulled out his driving licence. He had it with him and just wanted to try it. Why not allow gun licences?

There are other means of photo ID that we could allow. I would consider private sector identification. I am trying to enable people to vote by proving their ID in the easiest possible way. I do not want voter ID to be

a reason why people cannot vote if I can avoid it. That is where I am coming from.

Lord Anderson of Ipswich: You are not troubled by the implications for training polling station staff.

Graham Farrant: They can accommodate that to a degree. I suppose the question is about how far you would go. This is where I come back to what I said earlier. If we had implemented it differently, if we had said, "For the next two years, we're going to ask you for photo ID. If you do not have it with you, we're going to give you the voter authority certificate form for you to take away and fill in, but we're still going to allow you to vote", we could have had a narrow range.

My sense is that the range is just a bit too narrow. I am trying to find ways of broadening it to enable more people to vote. Even 75 people being turned away is 75 people too many who were disenfranchised. I am trying to find ways of enabling that.

Q38 **The Chair:** I have one other question, which has been raised elsewhere. There was a comment that the list of acceptable ID was rather London-centric. There is a particular status to the London travel pass for old people, whereas the Manchester one does not have that. I realise there is nobody here from Manchester, but is there a London-centric bias in the list of valid ID?

Martha Matheou: Not for the young population, no. 16+ Zip Oyster cards are not part of the list of valid ID. Those expire when they are 19. 18+ Student Oyster cards are also not valid. There are other forms of ID, which are used by the demographics we would want to come out and vote that, that have not been included. I understand the sentiment behind that, but most of the ID applies to all of us, across the UK and in Scotland. You have a lot more than us.

Graham Farrant: It is not a concept that has been raised with me and it is not one I have thought about before, but I will go away and think about it now.

Chair: I was just wondering, because the comment was made that, in looking at ID, the people drawing up the list have a geographic focus that tends to be London-based. I was just testing it out, because it has been raised.

Cleland Sneddon: That is not something that has been raised with us. If I reflect on the feedback we had, amongst the relatively small number of people who expressed frustration, rather than abusing staff, about being required to do it, most of the people expressing those opinions had photographic ID with them.

The one consistent challenge that was reported back to me was, "What problem is this scheme trying to fix?" I do not know about the other regions in the UK, but in Scotland there was very low evidence of any

electoral fraud. There was a question about whether it was necessary to go to this extent to address a relatively small problem.

That might be different in different regions. If it is a general election, you have to have consistency across the UK. I absolutely get that. That was the challenge that was thrown at us repeatedly.

Q39 Lord Strathclyde: I suspect you have already answered my question, but it is about the difference in the administration for local elections and the general election. What impact is that going to have on your administration? What impact might it have on the turnout? You have possibly already indicated that it would have a very small impact. You made the point that it would be rather less than the number of spoilt ballot papers, but could you comment on the generality of the impact?

Cleland Sneddon: I will try not to repeat myself. Apologies for that. If I take voter turnout, first, the recent by-election where we had voter ID requirements was a very false environment. It was at the end of a very long and protracted campaign season, if you want to call it that. It was not a good reflection on voter turnout. I expect that the next full general election will have a much higher turnout.

However, undoubtedly—I see this already—when we switch between different electoral events and different methodologies of voting, I see people coming in and voting as if it is an STV election. I had a ballot paper with 14 candidates on it in Rutherglen and Hamilton West. It was very long. I had evidence that people misunderstood the instructions from polling staff. As they were issuing them, the polling staff were giving advice as to what voters should look to do. I saw evidence of STV voting.

Lord Strathclyde: What proportion of voters was that? Was it hundreds or tens?

Cleland Sneddon: For a major event, you are potentially talking about a couple of hundred spoilt ballots, ballots where you are effectively saying that you are voting for more than one preference. People are doing that. From the markings they are using, you can see they are thinking about it in an STV way or the opposite.

Bear in mind that there is a really good Electoral Commission table mat, as they call it, with backing from case law. You can ensure that you accept the maximum votes, but you can definitely see that people struggle to switch modes, regardless of their awareness or the advice they get from polling staff. Again, it is just another added complication. When it is a UK-wide general election, you need to have consistency.

Graham Farrant: For me, the key about a general election is the stress and scale. We will get twice as many people voting in a general election as we have in a local. The stress levels are much higher. The political anxiety and interest is much higher. You will get more challenges about, “Why can this person not vote? Why does that not count?”

I expect it to be much more stressful. Voter ID just adds another element to that. The advantage of a general election is that we have national media broadcasting about the election 24 hours a day. What I would hope is that Electoral Commission can persuade BBC, ITV and Sky, as national broadcasters, to add in regular messaging. "If you want to vote, do not forget your voter ID. Take your photo ID to the polling station". We need to get them to repeat those messages.

There are other mechanisms. I would hope that every candidate would support this. It is in their interest, is it not? "If you are reading my leaflet, do not forget to take your photo ID to the polling station". I would hope that we could get more and more people to promulgate those messages, as well as the Electoral Commission doing its bit and us doing ours locally.

We will continue to repeat the message about voter ID on the council tax leaflets we send out, the letters and everything we can. In a general election there are more opportunities to do that. I would hope we could use those opportunities.

Martha Matheou: For London specifically, we will have cross boundaries at the end of this month that apply to the next parliamentary election. That will cause a great deal of work. Sutton is lucky not to have a cross boundary.

One of the issues we will have is not necessarily about the implementation or the administration of the voter ID; it is the people that we do not capture. We know turnout is high for parliamentary elections. If we are turning those people away in marginal seats, this will become an issue both locally politically and nationally politically. If people do not know, if we have not engaged with them and we are turning them away, those marginal seats affect what is happening. Cross-boundaries and marginal seats would be my biggest concern when it comes to voter ID in parliamentary elections.

Q40 **Lord Anderson of Ipswich:** I am wondering whether the number of turn-aways at a general election might be very much larger than the number of turn-aways at a local election or a by-election. Is it possible to argue that the sort of people who come along to vote in a local election or even in a by-election are enthusiastic voters? They are people who are committed to the democratic process and committed to participating, and therefore they are much more likely to know what the rules on voter ID are.

Although the turnout may be double in a general election, is it possible that the proportion of turn-aways might be very much more than double? I am inviting you to speculate, but I just wondered what your practical thoughts on that were.

Martha Matheou: The number of turn-aways will not double. People are far more engaged at a parliamentary election, hence the higher turnout. They come, because they want to vote in the national elections.

We turn people away now: people who are not registered or people who have moved. We turn those people away. They are just not recorded, because it is not a new policy. It has been happening for years. It does not necessarily double. We might perceive it as doubling, because there are so many more people wanting to participate rather than because they just did not turn up with the right documents or were not registered in the right area. It is about the enthusiasm for that particular election.

Cleland Sneddon: To add a reflection to that, this is about the nature of the electoral event. Your point is absolutely correct. The biggest turnout I have been involved in in my career was the Scottish independence referendum. It was around 84%; I forget the exact figure. That demonstrated the level of engagement and the importance of the outcome. Therefore, it mobilised people to vote.

For us, general elections are generally somewhere in the 60s. Council elections are generally somewhere in the 40s, and so on and so forth. Then we saw this recent by-election. Depending on the importance of the outcome of the electoral event, your turnout is going to increase, if people are motivated to turn out and the comms messaging is correct.

One of our colleagues was talking about how that ramps up as you get towards the election. That is not going to increase the percentage of rejected ballots and people who are turned away. It is simply the importance of the event that will dictate the turnout.

Graham Farrant: I think the answer is yes, all things being equal. What I am hoping is that national publicity will make things not equal, because it will give more coverage to the need for voter ID. If we had exactly the same level of publicity, your argument is sound, because it brings people to vote who have not voted in the local elections, et cetera, who do not have that experience. Those who we turned away the first time now know and will bring voter ID with them the first time. That will get a couple of hundred more votes straightaway. I am hoping that the national publicity will make a difference at a national election. The basic thesis is sound.

Q41 **Lord Thomas of Gresford:** My apologies for not being with you in person. I am on my way to Scotland. I am intending to spend the night in the Strathaven Hotel, which is very much in Mr Sneddon's area.

For polling staff, the change is from being facilitators to gatekeepers. We have already discussed the problems that are likely to arise specifically if there were to be an election in May when local elections would overlap with the general election. What contingency plans are there in a situation like that, where you are dealing with cross-border issues and so on?

Cleland Sneddon: Thank you. Please call it "Strathaven" so the locals do not chase you out of town. Again, as we indicated earlier, we need to keep a level head around the additional duties associated with voter ID so that we do not create the impression for future staff that this is significant.

However, there is anecdotal feedback from the number of call-offs I had in the by-election that people were concerned about being challenged in the polling place. They perceived that there may be some very direct challenge from potential voters, if they were turning them away for lack of appropriate identification. We need to scale that so that we do not create a barrier.

In answer to previous questions, colleagues have talked about the increasing challenge of getting staff willing to do a 15-hour day pretty much on minimum wage. The changing demographic for those staff, particularly in polling stations as opposed to count events, is a real challenge.

Post the by-election, one of the exercises I asked my election team to do was to go through our entire database. On paper, we had a very significant number of people available to draw into the election. Right at the last minute, when I had some very late call-offs, I did have to lift up the phone and ask for some support from an adjacent area.

That will not be available in the general election. Therefore, as other colleagues have mentioned, we will have to identify that contingency, but it is going to have a significant impact on council operations. It is going to do so at a time when the council's capacity is significantly reduced from five or 10 years ago, because we have a much smaller headcount and there are far fewer staff in councils that are not deployed in front-line services such as health and social care or education.

It is our contingency. We have to make sure this works effectively for us, but it is significantly more difficult. The staffing was probably the key issue for us before voter ID. It still is after voter ID. Voter ID is just another piece of that particular jigsaw. I hope that is helpful.

Graham Farrant: One of the perceptions I have is that I have about 400 staff who have realised that the voter ID requirement is not as bad as they thought it might be. That has come out of their experience in polling stations. When I spoke to those who I could speak to—I had around 50 polling stations during the election—they all said, "Yes, it was not as bad as we thought it was going to be. Most people are coming in with it ready". That will help me to calm it down considerably.

We have talked about the staff challenges. The one I want to mention is the count itself. We used to rely on bank tellers, who used to count notes regularly and were therefore good at counting bits of paper. They do not employ so many people to do that now. For the day after we also have to use the same group of staff or a different group of staff.

For local elections, we have moved very much to a count on the following day. For a general election, you have to start the count within so many hours of the polls having closed; I cannot remember how many hours it is. Therefore, you cannot have the same team coming back the following day. That is going to be a challenge for us as well, because it is much tighter in a general election than it was for our local. Probably half the

people that were in the polling stations came along for the count, which we did during the daytime on the Friday. That is another area of challenge.

It is another area where the environment around the elections process has changed. Twenty years ago, we used bank staff for the majority of our counting teams. I do not have that facility available now. A lot has changed. We focus on one aspect, but we need to see it from the perspective of the whole environment changing.

Martha Matheou: For London, voter ID is not the reason why we will have staffing issues. In the initial election it may have been overhyped as to how bad things would be in the polling station, but we have now had a year's experience to settle that.

We always have dropouts in our polling station staff. We do not retain them because of the wages we pay them. There is the idea that they are volunteers rather than employees for the day.

In London for the May elections, we have three ballot boxes. I need a presiding officer to pick up three ballot boxes from the civic offices plus all the ballot papers. They will have a whole carload of goodies to take to the polling station for me. If there is a parliamentary election on the same day, that will go to four ballot boxes. I am going to need people with minivans. I do not know. That is across all of London.

If there is a snap election, we will be counting and verifying the GLA and the parliamentary on the Thursday, going into the Friday before we can count the parliamentary. On Saturday, we will be doing the verification for the GLA. On Sunday, we will be counting. We do not have enough staff that we can recycle, who can go to sleep and then come the next day, in London to make that work logistically and to be comfortable. Planning is key for us. We will be crossing our fingers that we can find enough people to cover those four days.

Q42 **Baroness Suttie:** I wanted to refer back to the turn-away issue. Specifically to Mr Sneddon, you said that 299 were turned away, more or less two-thirds of whom came back. Did you do an analysis of the time of day people were turned away? It strikes me that that is a potential pinch point for the staff administering an election. If people arrive without ID past a certain time of night, there is no opportunity for them to go back.

In a previous session, I asked whether any specific thought had been given to training for that particular scenario, for people who are definitively turned away, because they do not have time to go home and pick up their ID.

Cleland Sneddon: For the two events in Scotland, there was not a requirement to do so, but the Electoral Commission asked us to collect information on the turn-aways and how many came back. We did do some paperwork. We did not record the time of the day. Again, this is anecdotal, but it really was a filthy and horrible day in many ways; the weather was terrible as well.

The majority of people who turned out came in the 11 am to 3 pm period, where it was slightly drier, rather than people coming at 9 pm or running right up to the close of the poll. Again, that is anecdotal and that is in a by-election. I would not extrapolate that too far to a full general election. This is a point, though. If someone turns up very late and does not have the appropriate identification, it may not be possible for them to return home and pick up their ID.

I will give you a bit of an anecdote. This goes to the previous point about the impression that can be created around voter ID. My practice, which colleagues have mentioned, is to spend a good chunk of my poll day out and about, going into polling stations, getting the temperature of the event, understanding what is taking place and speaking to candidates and agents, et cetera, as I go around.

I did get a call that there was some messaging going out from one of the national newspapers about problems with voter ID, et cetera. I was five minutes away from the polling station, which was really convenient. I jumped back in my car, nipped around there and walked in. There were three polling stations in the polling place. Everything was really quite calm. I spoke to each of the presiding officers and asked whether there had been any issues that morning. Two older couples had come in who had known about the voter ID but had just forgotten their bus passes. They had had a quick chat with the staff and then nipped home. Five minutes later, both couples came back and voted.

As I was leaving, one of the presiding officers said, "However, we have had a journalist here trying to say that it is terrible and the whole event is a shambles, et cetera, and trying to put words in our mouths". Again, we need to watch the messaging that comes out from events and make sure we calibrate any information we are getting to see whether it is verified.

Q43 The Chair: Just before we finally leave this issue, we have talked a lot about what happens at polling stations and having ID, but it has been suggested that there is a deterrent effect: people do not present themselves, because the very fact they have to have photo ID makes them less likely to vote. We are taking evidence from Ipsos in a week or so. We have evidence from them that, if you disaggregate by demographic, there is a particular concentration risk and the barriers are greater for certain groups. Their figures show that 15% of those from ethnic minority backgrounds say that the need for ID makes them less likely to vote. For those in deprived areas, it is 11%.

Do you have any reflections on the concentration risk of the barriers presenting themselves? How would you see that in your constituencies, if it were emerging?

Graham Farrant: My councillors debated this on Tuesday evening at the council meeting. They felt there was a demographic divide and that those with the highest levels of deprivation were more likely to be excluded from voting by not having voter ID. As you will guess from that, there

was a political divide in the room between the parties. They did eventually pass a resolution. They felt there was a divide and that voter ID was causing problems primarily for those with the highest levels of deprivation.

Unfortunately, I cannot evidence that. All I can show is that turnout was 3% lower than it was four years ago, but it is difficult to demonstrate that a 3% change in the margin of turnout was due to a particular factor. 2019 was the first election with the brand new council that had been formed. 2023 was four years on. There are all sorts of factors that are in play within that. I cannot demonstrate that.

They do have individual examples: "I knocked on the door. I spoke to this family. They did not have voter ID. They could not vote". There were individual examples of that, but I cannot really extrapolate that or give any figures around it, unfortunately. The feeling amongst a number of my councillors was that it had caused an additional barrier. I just cannot demonstrate it.

Martha Matheou: From an administration point of view, as this becomes business as usual, I worry that electoral services will be targeted for the demographic failure, for the people who are not going out to vote. People will say, "Your registers are low". Our registers might be complete, but the turnout figures will be substantially lower. Unless we properly engage and understand who the vulnerable are, who we need to do this outreach work for, I worry that it will cause a problem moving forward. I agree with it in principle. At this stage, I do not know how well and how quickly we can achieve a successful plan for it.

Cleland Sneddon: Again, I agree with both colleagues. I could not evidence this, but I would suspect that the Ipsos feedback is probably accurate, even before they verify it through their survey. I would suggest those same demographics are those who were least likely to participate in previous electoral events. They will probably remain so.

The challenge is about ensuring that voter identification does not become an additional barrier for them. That comes back to the measure we mentioned earlier about communication, engagement and how we support them to exercise their electoral mandate.

The Chair: It is a cumulative contributor, not a primary driver.

Q44 **Lord Anderson of Ipswich:** I have some practical questions about the cost of implementing voter ID. First of all, very basically, what has to be paid for? What are the elements of additional cost? Could you give us some idea of the amount of those costs? How much of those costs fall to local authorities? Do election administrators feel adequately supported financially by local authorities? Are you content that local authorities should shoulder that burden, or would you make the case for a higher degree of central government support?

Do not feel you all have to answer all those questions. I thought I would just show you what was on my mind and then let you go ahead.

Cleland Sneddon: Thank you for the question. I will answer it circuitously, if you do not mind. The previous local authority where I was chief executive was Argyll and Bute. As you know, Argyll and Bute is on the west coast of Scotland and subject to some pretty extreme weather. Having a snap election in December created additional cost. Around electoral events there was significant additional gritting, snow clearing and things of that nature. That local authority never got full cost recovery, so a local authority ends up subsidising a UK general election event.

I say that to link it back to voter identification. To answer one of your specific questions, local authorities should never be subsidising general election events undertaken on behalf of Parliament. There needs to be a mechanism for full cost recovery and a continuous review of the costs associated with delivering an election.

I mentioned that I deployed some additional staffing to make the voter identification process run more smoothly. It was very effective and will be even more effective when you get a bigger turnout. This includes things such as information officers and additional staff in the larger polling places.

There are some additional costs. Martha mentioned the A4 size of the certificate. Again, there is the printing and enveloping of those and the distribution by mail. All these things add additional cost. There are privacy screens, mirrors, additional stationary, et cetera. By further extension, due to the rate of call-offs—I can only attribute a bit of that to voter ID—we had to repeat training events with additional groups of staff as we went through.

There are some additional costs. For voter identification, they are not the most significant cost events. I liked the general principle of your question: local authorities should never be subsidising UK general elections.

Graham Farrant: From our experience, there were clearly additional cost burdens, particularly around the training requirements and things like that for the core staff. There is more burden on the core staff. We absorb that within the core staffing cost. Most of that did not result in additional expenditure.

In the polling stations, there was a requirement for additional equipment. Privacy screens and mirrors were required in all polling stations. We have about 160 polling stations. We provided 160 privacy screens and 160 mirrors. I do not believe any of those were used on the day in our local elections, but we provided them.

My worry is that the new burdens funding paid for the initial purchase. However, for things like privacy screens and mirrors, you will want to use them for the next election, the one after that and the one after that. They may not all be around. The replacement costs will be added as a burden to the electoral service.

The initial funding was not huge. We found cheap sources of hand-held mirrors and privacy screens. My worry is that they will not last as long as the other paraphernalia, so we will have the cost burden of replacing those in due course. It is a bit marginal, though. Given the cost of putting on the election, with all the staff and the temporary polling stations, et cetera, the cost is relatively marginal.

We provided additional greeters. Wherever we had two or more polling stations in the same location, we provided a greeter to be at the front door to say, "Do you have your photo ID?" They were also recording if they turned anybody away. It was not an initial phase outside of the recording, but we did provide an extra member staff in all those polling stations.

We are not sure they are needed on a full-time basis, but we provided them this time. For a general election, if you double the turnout, we may well need more people and that may be a justifiable cost. As I say, our sense was that the initial cost outlay was covered. We have a concern about maintaining that and keeping it going in future years.

Lord Anderson of Ipswich: I have a really ignorant question. Why are hand-held mirrors needed in polling stations?

Graham Farrant: If somebody turns up in a hijab, for example, they have to expose their face to prove their photo ID. When they are putting it back on again, we provide a mirror to make sure they have covered up properly and are dressed appropriately.

Lord Anderson of Ipswich: Now I know. Thank you very much.

Martha Matheou: If they do not want to take it fully off, I believe they can also place it underneath so you can see their face, rather than just for correcting their dress.

We were funded. We did not have elections in London. The problem with voter ID is that we do not know where the spikes will be. The core teams are running the election for the 25-day period, dealing with the introduction of the postal vote online system and typing out all the paper applications. We do not know the costs and late hours that will be required. We always guess. We know that in an election period no one goes home. We are a family in electoral services teams.

They should not be funded by the local authority. These are the burdens of the Elections Act. There has been a suggestion that these burdens will be funded for a period of time. With that in mind, most of these are very election-specific. All the new burdens in the Elections Act are about how someone then gets to vote.

I appreciate that it falls on the ERO side to do all the administration, but we are always overspent in electoral services. We always have to fight for election payments coming back. We are told how much we can spend. If we go over, we have to justify what we spend, which is correct. We argue

with the Elections Claims Unit about supplying water. We argue about the small things rather than how much someone is being paid an hour.

There needs to be a big review about what we are given. At the moment, we cannot tell whether it is per elector or per pence. You cannot divide it by your electorate. You might have received £2,000 for overseas electors, but you might have a spike of 4,000 electors. The £2,000 would not cover the work involved to put them on to your register and send all the documents you need.

There needs to be some review. I am not saying that we are not totally supported. We know there are the justification-led bids that we can apply for, for privacy screens and things like that. It would be better if it were less complicated and there were less red tape to be able to tap into it.

Q45 **Baroness Suttie:** You have all touched a little on this already. Are you aware of any actual instances of staff abuse at polling stations as a result of the introduction of voter ID? What sort of measures should be put in place to prevent staff abuse at the next general election?

Cleland Sneddon: There is a difference between frustration and abuse. I saw and had fed back to me instances of people being frustrated with the process, asking why they have to do this, talking about conspiracy theories, saying, "You're disenfranchising poor people", et cetera, and those kinds of comments. Most often, they ask why we need to do this at all, because there is not a lot of voter fraud as far as everybody is concerned. There was no outright abuse of the staff directly. That would have been fed directly to me. It is not to say it will not happen at some point or in different locations.

This comes back to the respect in which we hold officers who are working in public services more generally. I am seeing increasing incidence of front-line staff being subjected to abuse because someone is dissatisfied with the level of service they can access. For this particular event, I saw frustration, not abuse.

Graham Farrant: We could not attribute any direct abuse to the voter ID requirements. There are always people who get frustrated, as Cleland has just said, when they are voting. We did not notice any particular spike. The presiding officers are generally able to calm somebody down when there is a challenge or an issue. We had a few people doing things like, as I say, producing a gun licence and asking why it is not good enough, but not in abusive way.

The Chair: He did not have his gun with him.

Graham Farrant: Not as far as I am aware, no.

The Chair: That is a different election.

Martha Matheou: We turned people away before voter ID. There is a level of abuse that staff see when you turn someone away and tell them they cannot vote if they have come out in the rain or whatever it is. It is

the same level. Voter ID has not introduced another barrier or another situation that I have to think about more. It existed before. The law is the law. If we say no and you have to leave, how you react depends on your character. As the others have said, we train our staff to pacify people, to be multifaceted and to know how to communicate with the public. It is key.

Baroness Suttie: The Local Government Information Unit has suggested that local areas should ensure that the police are informed of potential hot points. Would you agree with that proposal?

Graham Farrant: We work closely—we have a single point of contact—with our local police force specifically for elections. We work very closely with them. We exchange intelligence. That has been my experience in all the authorities I have worked in. I used to run Thurrock Council. There were particular areas there where the police were aware of protests. At that point the BNP were quite active and therefore they were aware of some of the challenges they might bring.

That has always been the tradition. We get a good police presence in most places. They are visible on election day. That relationship works very well. I have not had the occasion to call out a large influx of police for any particular issue, because it just has not arisen. If we had any intelligence that evidenced a large-scale protest, they would work closely with us.

Cleland Sneddon: We have exactly the same arrangements with Police Scotland.

Martha Matheou: At national elections, we have a single point of contact. The London boroughs have a seminar, so we know who our contact is. Safer Neighbourhood teams are given a polling station and try to go twice within the period. It works very well. We have a very good working relationship.

Q46 **Lord Anderson of Ipswich:** We have heard of various alternatives being suggested to voter ID, or indeed supplements to voter ID, for people who do not have authorisation with them. The two main candidates that have been suggested are, first, attestation by another registered voter and, secondly, statutory declaration by the voter, which might be simpler. You would not require someone to vouch for you. On the other hand, some people might say, "How is that different from the law prior to voter ID?"

It would be interesting to hear from each of you what you think about those. Do they have a place? Mr Farrant, in your very first answer you suggested something that interested me, which is that there may be a case for allowing statutory declarations or something similar on a temporary basis until people have understood the voter ID requirement.

Graham Farrant: The implementation, because it was a cliff-edge implementation, could have been easier. That could have been a useful tool.

Attestation by somebody in the same address could be legitimate. Do not forget that we are still crossing people off the electoral roll, so we know who has voted. It is not as if somebody can come in and say that somebody else is their partner or lives at the same address, and then that person can come in and vote afterwards if it was fraudulent. We do have those other controls in mind.

Attestation by somebody from the same address or the same family group might well be acceptable. On a permanent basis, I am less comfortable with self-declaration. It feels like anybody could go in and say they are whoever they want to be. That feels too weak.

Lord Anderson of Ipswich: The theory is that they would submit to a photograph. In theory, the police could then follow up, if there were some suggestion of fraud. Going through that process might have some deterrent effect. That would be the theory. You are not very comfortable with doing that.

Graham Farrant: If you were to put some more control measures behind it, I could probably live with it, but I am not sure I would start there. I would start with widening the photo IDs that are permissible.

Cleland Sneddon: If it was a self-declaration, it does take you back to pre-voter ID and you then question the whole programme. The process would need to be carefully thought through.

For me, this is about the independence and privacy of the voting act itself. We would need to ensure that anyone being accompanied into the polling place is not subject to coercion or intimidation in some way while they are voting. That would be an added burden for polling staff.

Picking up Graham's point, if it had to be someone in the same household, that might get through it on a short-term basis. I am not sure that is the long-term answer to identification.

I have one final point. The criminal aspect of impersonation at an electoral event does not change. Before voter ID was introduced, if someone participated in electoral fraud, Police Scotland in our context, or the police forces around the UK, would investigate and pursue it. They would be the ones to do that. The polling staff themselves will facilitate the vote, if someone comes in with the right paperwork and can answer the defined questions. This would just be a different version of that. If someone comes in who is vouched for or who attests themselves, if they are subject to a further investigation, the same criminal law proceedings would follow thereafter.

Martha Matheou: It is going backwards, in terms of the introduction of voter ID, if it is for fraud purposes.

Also, if you arrive at the polling station and you have just forgotten your ID or you are too far away to go back, it is easy to say, "You're with me. Let's just sign this off", rather than, "You need a form of ID". I appreciate that we do not want to keep sending people away, but we have to teach

people to bring it with them. Otherwise, we will never get to the point where it can be business as usual.

The big problem with attestation is that, again, the burden falls on the polling station staff. It is not a form you fill in. You have to take them aside. In London, as I am sure in other places, there can be queues. You might have someone handing in a postal vote. There is only one presiding officer. People will forget their IDs and this will happen a lot, rather than being told, "You do not have voter ID". I do not like it.

Lord Anderson of Ipswich: It is great to have clear answers. Thank you all very much.

Q47 **The Chair:** We have two final questions. I want to come on to an issue that the AEA and Peter Stanyon have particularly given us evidence on, which is pre-existing stress in the electoral system as a whole now being added to by voter ID and the changes flowing from the Elections Act 2022. Can you give us your sense of the cumulative impact of these stresses in the electoral system and your confidence around that?

Graham Farrant: I have a view on this. We are adding more and more modern processes on to what is fundamentally an old-fashioned system. We should be doing a fundamental review of the electoral process and the voting process, not trying to add additional layers on top of it.

My worry is that, when you look at the way young people live their lives in the digital environment, we are not accessing any of those parts. We are making the bureaucratic bit more and more difficult. We will almost certainly see an increase in the request for postal votes. As we have already described, the workload for us from a postal vote is much more burdensome than somebody turning up, putting a cross on a paper, putting it into a ballot box and us counting it.

All those extra burdens are cumulatively having a real impact, at a time when Royal Mail has decreasing capacity—we are putting greater and greater reliance on it—counting staff are less available and people are less inclined to participate in the electoral process by working on it. My worry is that we are adding, for very good reason, individual elements that just make it more and more complicated and more and more burdensome. The resource requirements are getting higher at a time when most things in our life are getting simpler and easier to do through digital means.

My personal view is that some of these are the wrong answers to the challenges. We should be thinking about how to modernise the fundamental electoral process while building in the safeguards that we are trying to build in. My sense is that we are making it more complicated and more difficult in a way we would not need to if we were to do a fundamental review of the electoral process.

That is my concern. We are putting more burden on local government. We are putting more burden on a reducing number of officers to provide these services. We expect 100% accuracy and we need 100% accuracy. I

had wards that were decided by five or fewer votes. The margin between the candidates was that slim. I need to be 100% accurate. Interestingly, very often first counts vary from second counts. The margin is so tight. I worry that these extra burdens are just going to cause us problems in the longer term.

Cleland Sneddon: The problem with going second or third is that all the relevant points have been made. I will go a little further on what a modern electoral system would look like. The events that happened in Florida in 2000 were a setback to the concept of digital voting back. Two decades on, we have not been able to gain sufficient assurance around cybersecurity, et cetera, to make it happen.

We are taking quite a manual and cumbersome process and adding a couple of bits to it—it is almost like a Jenga puzzle—at a time when local authority resource, which is what is used by returning officers to run elections, is decreasing. The foundations are getting a little bit shakier, and we are adding a couple of bits to the top.

I would agree with Graham. We need to take a long and detailed look at the future digital capacity around elections to try to make it easier for people to vote, make the administration a great deal easier, make it much more economic to deliver and to see whether there is a way to gain the levels of assurance that are necessary. I say that in a context where there are cyberattacks on a daily basis that we are all fending off.

Martha Matheou: It is all happening together. Voter ID is being introduced and we now have the ERO portal, on the administration side, for the core team. We have not had a review and been able to say, "This does not work. Can we have this?" We have not had any adjustments made to make the processes better within our teams.

We have had the introduction of the postal votes online. There are proxies, but you cannot apply online for all proxy applications. That is not ready. You cannot apply for all postal votes online. If I am a customer trying to apply to have a proxy for disability, I will realise that I have to do that via paper, but the messaging is, "You can now apply online for all these various things".

We are introducing things that are potentially confusing. The message is, "We want everyone to apply online". That is the message, because it means that our core teams are not spending time on paper applications, typing out information and adding it to the portal that hosts all this information. We should have waited for that to be ready and for the processes to be in place. At the moment, we have no integration or automation in the way we used to work. All the tasks have doubled in time for us.

When you are talking about a period like now, when you might have 200 or 300 postal vote applications coming in, that is okay. When you are talking about the week before the election, you will have 2,000 or 3,000,

all coming in on paper. It will get better, but people have to learn to do everything online. That is the problem.

The 15-year rule for overseas electors will be introduced in January. There is still quite a lot of work to be done not only on the administration side but on the policy side, we believe, as administrators. I talk as an administrator; this is my opinion. It is not ready to go live. I worry that we are pushing these things through without taking stock of the journey for the elector and what it will involve for the back-end office.

At this stage, people do not know that they cannot hand in their postal vote to the civic offices by walking past and putting it in the post box. They will be required to fill in a form; otherwise, their vote will be rejected. There is so much that we have to teach my voters as to what will happen for their vote to count. If we phased these things in individually, we could cope with it, adapt and review. At the moment, it is all happening far too quickly for the May 2024 election. It does worry me.

The Chair: Some have argued that the Elections Act tranche 2 measures could be delayed. Almost all of them, apart from postal vote handling and secrecy, have gone through both Houses, so it is an inevitability. The only one waiting to go through the Commons is that postal vote handling one. It is coming your way. What is your instinct or sense about whether one local authority or another will topple over under this and create a little crisis on the day?

Martha Matheou: Can I give an example? There were two core officers that worked in York, hence why we went to help for the election. They will not be able to cope with all these changes. I am not saying they are not good enough to cope. They would have to work very long hours. Electoral administrators are a strange breed. Our teams will work long hours. We will get it done and we will get it right. We are very dedicated. I can say that across all authorities, not just London.

I am in a team of six, and we still work late and there is a lot of pressure. I feel for somebody who is in a team of two. In a team of six, we feel the pressure. We are working. We do not see our families. It is not that that is a problem. It is our professional choice to work in these areas, but there is a big strain and a burden.

We were talking about funding. If there is no funding for an additional member of staff or there is a recruitment freeze because the local authority is not doing as well financially, these can all have a domino effect. It will be down to a couple of individuals. That is a very big ask.

The Chair: I am trying to find the figures here, but we have some evidence that you are subject to peaks. Just before elections come, you get these great peaks in the registration of voters and stuff like that. Presumably, the inefficiencies in the system are really aggravated by these peaks, which appear to be quite commonplace. That will be recognised by you, of course.

Graham Farrant: Yes, particularly as new requirements come in. If people are not used to filling in particular bits of information, the accuracy of the submission is lower, and therefore the work burden of each application may be greater.

Looking to May 2024, I will have a police and crime commissioner election. That is one of the least popular elections. It has the lowest turnout and the lowest levels of interest. In my area, that is all I have at the moment. That will be a relatively easy training ground for all these new requirements. It will certainly be less burdensome than certainly in London, where you will have the local elections, the GLA election and the mayoral election. If there were a general election at the same time, it would cause a huge burden across the country, because there will be no areas where there is a downturn in activity. That will be a real challenge.

Every local authority will do everything it can to avoid a collapse in the electoral process. We have to make it work so we will do what we can and what we need to. That may be at the expense of other things.

Cleland Sneddon: We have the benefit of having our electoral events decoupled as much as we can, because a general election could land at any time. We do not have the cumulative effect that Martha has mentioned.

It is unlikely that these additional elements will be the straw that breaks the camel's back, but the camel is at the chiropractor right now and it is really struggling. There will be substantial challenges for every local authority area in conducting a general election at any time during 2024. These are just a couple of additional elements that we have to accommodate.

Every authority will do everything it can to make sure it delivers a visibly accurate and actually accurate and successful electoral event. It probably then gets to a point where doing this causes a level of disruption to the core functions of the local authority. Front-line services are now significantly pared back and that is likely to continue to be the case. To deliver an electoral event, you are probably going to have to disrupt some pretty core services.

Q48 **Lord Strathclyde:** This is a fairly quick question. It is about data collection. Are you collecting data? How much of a burden is it? Particularly in Scotland and with the by-election, was a burden placed on the local authority to collect that data? Will you continue to collect data?

Cleland Sneddon: Yes, we did. We did so on a voluntary basis around the petition process and then the by-election. We did not collect it in the level of detail that was indicated earlier about the timing of turn-aways.

My reflection on this is, yes, we will continue to collect data if it has a purpose. We need to make the recording of that as simple as possible for those who are in polling places. I will keep the answer short.

Graham Farrant: It was another job to do. It did not add a particular burden that broke anything, but it was another job to do. We will continue to collect the same data for all future elections, because we want everything to be as consistent in each election as is possible.

Our concern was about the urgency of the requirement for the information, particularly from the press. We collected it on paper. We have 160 polling stations. We bring everything back, and then suddenly we all want the answers instantly. That is the challenge for the team. They are under huge pressure to do the sums, get it accurate and get it out. That is the issue.

It is the logistical challenges and the pressure. We will continue to collect the data, because we would rather have the data than not and we want everything to be consistent.

Martha Matheou: It is useful. We need to target areas. We need to know what is happening in our local authorities. It does not need to be a form that is given. We have polling station logbooks in London. We put down who has come in with a postal vote and we mark in bar-gate style. This is stuff we can collate ourselves rather than having all these additional bits of paper.

We have Electoral Commission data that we have to do after the election, the form K. If we know that is a question that will be asked and we will have to report back, we will record it. It is as simple as that.

Q49 **The Chair:** For the next general election, there is a legal duty on data, is there not? The bar is raised. When it comes to voter ID data, one of the issues that has come across in evidence is the inconsistency of the data. You cannot assume that it has been collected in a consistent way between different polling stations or local authorities. First, there is the role of greeters and their influence. Secondly, if a couple walk in together and one is rejected but they both go, that is recorded as one. There are all sorts of little things.

What could be done—it should be proportionate, given the other demands that are on you—to prescribe the data and control the quality of the data produced on voter ID?

Graham Farrant: Provided the definition of the data requirement is clear, we can follow that. For example, we had greeters. If the greeter said to somebody, "Do you have your photo ID?" and they did not, we made sure we recorded that. We did not record if a teller or a candidate spoke to somebody before the greeter and then that person went away due to that. Those people would not have experienced the polling station staff.

If the requirement is to record anybody who talks to polling station staff and who is then turned away, we could record that reasonably consistently. Again, the definitions are reasonably clear. They just need to be consistent.

We use our training opportunities. It will get more and more consistent as these things get embedded. In the first year, people will always interpret things slightly differently. We will feed that into our training sessions. We will get more feedback. As Cleland said, going around polling stations and seeing what happens in practice gives you some really good ideas to feed into the following year's training. It will get better. Those inconsistencies will be rubbed out. We just need a clear definition of what people want.

Martha Matheou: The data is being collected because of the new policy: "How many people did we turn away? Who was disenfranchised?" Moving forward, it is about our local engagement plans. The data we collect on those who we turn away is about the areas we need to target. If 15 have been turned away at this polling station, 10 of which we recorded, but all the other polling stations recorded two, we know there is a problem in this area.

Moving forward, although I understand why we are recording it in the way we are recording it now, this data collection benefits local authorities and the ROs. It helps them to engage with the voters. Although I am saying that I understand, moving forward, we need to make it benefit the teams and the way we operate at elections.

The Chair: This was very interesting. Those were very informative contributions. Thank you very much. We respect the vast experience between you. You were very measured and informative. This is not a binary issue about whether you are pro or anti voter ID. We are looking at the efficiency of the electoral system and the application of voter ID within that.

It was very informative. I am very grateful that some of you have travelled a long way to come and talk to us at great length. Thank you very much indeed.