



Select Committee on the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

Uncorrected oral evidence: Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013

3 March 2020

4.20 pm

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Members present: Lord Shutt of Greetland (The Chair); Lord Campbell-Savours; Lord Dykes; Lord Hayward; Lord Janvrin; Baroness Pidding; Lord Wills.

Evidence Session No. 13

Heard in Public

Questions 147 - 158

Witnesses

I: Gordon Amos, Electoral Services Manager, Watford Borough Council; Steve Daynes, Democracy Manager, Braintree District Council; Charlotte Griffiths, Electoral Services Manager, Woking Borough Council.

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Examination of Witnesses

Gordon Amos, Steve Daynes and Charlotte Griffiths.

Q147 **The Chair:** Welcome to this evidence session of the Select Committee on the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. The meeting is being broadcast live via the parliamentary website. A transcript of the meeting will be taken and published on the committee website. You will have the opportunity to make corrections to that transcript where necessary. That is the formal bit.

We now go into the detailed questioning. The first one from me is about how your local authority came to be involved in this voter ID pilot. Can you tell us a little about what form of voter ID was required in your pilot? It may well have been different in each of the cases. In other words, how did you come to join this club?

Charlotte Griffiths: Woking has been on the Electoral Commission's list of areas that are at risk of electoral fraud for many years. That is hopefully now moving off the radar. When the pilots were announced, our returning officer came out of his office and said, "Right, Charlotte. We are doing the pilot. Get in touch with the Cabinet Office and get your name down". I said, "Okay, fine", so we did.

For us, it was always about trying to look at the most secure way of doing this. From the very beginning, it was about trialling photographic ID; that was the most secure way of getting ID in the polling station. We did look to get council support on that as well and, because the councillors were aware of the historic situation in Woking, they supported us going forward with the Cabinet Office. We went back to them with our proposals as to what we would look to trial in 2018, to which they agreed, and then we were on the pilot.

Subsequently, because we have elections by thirds, there was an opportunity for us to take part in 2019 as well. From our point of view, because it had worked in 2018, doing it again in 2019 was able to provide that extra level of reassurance as to whether it was a blip or whether it could be sustained in the area and, hopefully, provide more information for the Cabinet Office and the Electoral Commission to make their proper evaluation.

The Chair: What form of ID did you pilot?

Charlotte Griffiths: We went with the full photographic ID, so not a poll card or mix; it had to be a photographic form of ID. Between the two years, the list of ID that we asked for did change, following feedback in 2018. In addition to that, we had our own local elector card. I hasten to add that it was not an ID card; it was a local elector card that we issued to people that did not have one of the prescribed forms of ID.

Gordon Amos: It was quite similar—but the opposite in a way. We do not, in Watford, have any particular history of electoral fraud. We have a similar sort of population, in so far as it is very much a cross-section—a

third, a third, a third—with regards to residents and origins. The way we looked at it was from the point of view that forcing photographic ID would create problems for certain sections within the community.

Consequently, how did we get involved? I have to say that it was my fault. Going back to 2014, I was involved with the Cabinet Office to establish IER—Individual Electoral Registration—and I was the county lead for Hertfordshire. I worked closely with the Cabinet Office and consequently had a reasonably good relationship with the Senior Civil Service's Mark Hughes. We sat down and talked about it, and agreed that a means to tighten up the security was essential, on the basis that the prospect and the possibility of electoral fraud was there. We all recognised it. Certain categories of people, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, do not vote. It is against what they believe, on the whole and, as a consequence, if you knew somebody like that who was not going to vote, you could just turn up at his polling station, pretend you were him and cast his vote. This personation and the particular type of fraud that we are talking about really stood out.

As I said, I have been doing the job for a long time—almost 40 years this year—and only once, in all of those years, have I ever had a case of personation. The situation is, "How do you prove it?" In the example that I highlighted to you there, that person does not go to vote. That person does not check whether he has been out and voted. We never knew what level of personation as a fraud had been committed across the UK.

There were cases. The criticism across the board was always, "Why is there this sledgehammer to crack a nut?" because there are so few numbers that actually lead to prosecution and that must mean that there are so few cases actually getting there in the beginning. It was an unknown but the fear was, similarly, that, "If it is not a big problem, are we disenfranchising people, or is there a potential for disenfranchising people, by forcing them to bring photographic ID?"

We came up with a solution that was based upon the poll card. People said, "It is just a document. It has no photo on it or anything else", but, stepping back, the way we looked at it was that the poll card was prepared for a specific election. It was delivered to the individual's registered address only a matter of a week or two before the polling date. Therefore, there had to be a contact between that person and that address.

Perhaps it is a good idea to take you back to that one occasion when I said I had a case of personation. It was when a businessman had gone to America. There was a parliamentary election and, hey presto, he was very forward-thinking; he appointed somebody to act as his proxy. On the day in question, somebody else turned up and voted, so literally stole his vote. Later on that day, the proxy turned up and is told he has already been in to vote: "He cannot be. He is in America on business. That is why he appointed me to act as his proxy".

The next step is to take it that much further. You go to the police, the police do their investigations and they ask the questions, but, at the end of the day, where does it end up? Nowhere, because you ask the polling staff, "Do you remember the chap who came in? How many people came in?" "Several hundred. I don't know what he looked like. I cannot remember him at all". Consequently, the police have nowhere to start, but, going back to the way in which we looked at the poll card way of piloting it, that poll card was delivered to that address. If the person turns up at the polling station with that poll card, he clearly had access to that address, unless he has burgled it. He either uses the poll card that was delivered to the registration address—there is security there—or else he has some other form of photographic-type ID, which would have been acceptable.

Mark and I talked this one through quite extensively. As I said, he turned round to me and said, "Will you do it? Can you do this thing, using technology as well?" We have a solid way of going forward, without the need for photographic evidence and without the possibility of disenfranchising anybody.

Perhaps I should say now that it is a fact that there are a number of people in the communities around the country who have no photographic ID. There is no question about it. They are elderly or more suspect groups or individuals. I have a partner with a 99-year-old mother who has no passport and no driving licence. There are thousands of people in the UK like this, and our concern was that those would all go to ground. They would be lost in the need for this type of thing. It is okay to say, "That is fine. We have put a system in place whereby the electoral registration officers and local councils have a responsibility to find these people and ensure they have the facilities and the means to obtain"—as in Charlotte's case there—"a voter ID card", but we have to be honest about this: if you are elderly or in one of those minority groups, the chance of you actually taking up that opportunity is reduced, because you will not bother. That was the fear.

Democracy is there. What we have in the UK is special and it needs to be there for all the people who are eligible. Using the poll card was seen as the means to enable that to happen. I had to go back to my council and try to convince my returning officer and my elected mayor, Dorothy Thornhill, who is now in the House of Lords. They both agreed that there was danger of disenfranchising the electorate and, therefore, it was good to pursue our particular type of pilot.

The Chair: Many people think they have to bring the poll card anyway. Many people think that at the present time, but you must have printed on your poll card, in big print, "Bring this with you".

Gordon Amos: Absolutely, and it was done in conjunction with technology in the polling station. That put the extra security aspect in it as well.

Lord Hayward: Sorry to interrupt, but I have just turned up the poster

that you used. I do not know whether it is a poster, but it actually says, "Bring your poll card with you, Watford, 3 May 2018". Was that issued to voters, or was it a poster in the local papers? What means was used?

Gordon Amos: There was a whole extensive advertising campaign. There were posters. That information was included on the actual poll cards, on the poll card envelopes and everything out there. The statistics, if you want me to go into that, proved that message was delivered.

The Chair: The other thing on that is whether you had evidence as to how many people were turned away because they had not brought the poll card.

Gordon Amos: Yes. I have those statistics if you want them.

The Chair: Is that significant?

Gordon Amos: The number turned away without poll cards was quite low. Very similar to Northern Ireland, the vast majority of those who did turn up without a poll card went away and came back with some other form of ID. The total number of voters who were disenfranchised, because they brought neither their poll card nor another form of photographic ID that was acceptable, ironically was 42, both in 2018 and 2019.

The Chair: That is across a parliamentary constituency?

Gordon Amos: That is across the whole borough.

Lord Dykes: How many posters were displayed in other places?

Gordon Amos: It was a vast campaign. They were displayed in the high street; they were on bus shelters; they were on waste wagons. I was even on the local radio, I am sad to say.

Q148 **Lord Wills:** I find the way you have gone about trying to square this circle very impressive, because, as you know, many people are very worried about the introduction of voter ID and disenfranchisement. I just wondered what you thought about future-proofing your poll card system and whether you would envisage there always being some sort of paper element to the process.

Gordon Amos: We have already thought ahead of that. You are quite correct. The poll card is paper, as is required by current regulations, but just as we travel on aeroplanes and trains, et cetera, nowadays, it could be done on a mobile phone.

Lord Wills: Have you developed that system?

Gordon Amos: The software provider that we worked with in 2018 and 2019 has already done some work in that regard, yes, and we have supported them.

Steve Daynes: Unlike Charlotte and Gordon, who came on board in 2018, I was part of the reference group in 2018, so did not run a pilot; I am the new boy, if you like. Taking the models that both Charlotte at Woking and Gordon at Watford ran, my returning officer at Braintree and I had a look at how things were progressing, took account of our heavily rural area and came to the conclusion that, because of the infrastructures, both transport and digital, probably a totally photo model would not suit our demographic.

We came up with a proposal to have a mixed model, where electors could either bring a photo or two types of non-photo, one of which must contain the address. That is relatively straightforward because, similar to Watford, they have the poll card, so they already have one piece of evidence. They could then bring their debit card, credit card or bank statement and, as the pilot progressed, the list ended up with about 28 different non-photo pieces of evidence.

In reality, probably two or three non-photo pieces of evidence would be sufficient going forward, but our main concern, similar to Watford's, was that the elderly, some of the ethnic minorities and the LGBT community may have difficulty in producing photographic evidence. Therefore, if there was a non-photo bailout or get-out-of-jail-free card, that would underpin the whole security of the ballot, but, by the same token, it would provide them with the opportunity of voting without having to seek out an additional piece of evidence. If we take my elderly father, he would be unlikely to go out and get a piece of photo evidence just to hang on to for one year.

I will probably get killed by my colleagues for saying this, but elections do not come along every week, although it seems like it at the moment. The electors may well lose their card, so then we are into a reissuing of a card. I am not convinced that to have an electoral card would be a solution, given that, in this day and age, we have a vast array of evidence available to us.

Lord Wills: I have just one follow-up question. You all seem to be addressing this problem very constructively, and the thought just occurs to me that when you have all these alternative forms of identification, what argument would you make for the Government proceeding with voter ID and photographic evidence at all? You are quite comfortable, apparently, taking alternative forms of identification. Why go to all the expense and bother of voter ID, particularly when I still bear the scars of when the last Labour Government was thinking about bringing ID cards in, and a huge number of people who are now very vigorously in favour of voter ID were very vociferous in telling us what a terrible idea that was. I just wonder what arguments you would bring forward for proceeding with voter ID.

Steve Daynes: The argument is that there is no large-scale evidence of voter fraud in this country. There are isolated high-profile cases, but to say that it is never going to happen is a bit like horses and stable doors. There is a belief that, in becoming an elected councillor or Member of

Parliament, there is both financial kudos and status in society, and that has an increasing value to some people. If you place value on it, then there are people who may well seek to exploit that.

Q149 **Lord Wills:** You have brought in other measures apart from the specific voter ID card to prove identity, which you are presumably happy are robust. Why proceed with something new? Why go to the expense, with the problems of voter ID cards and all the challenges you have mentioned? What specifically can that contribute when you are prepared to accept alternative forms of ID to tackle the problem you have just mentioned?

Gordon Amos: When I was talking to Mark back in those early days, quite bluntly, I said that we would perhaps be looked at and accused by Joe Public of bringing in ID cards via the backdoor, as a political point. There is no question about that. All of a sudden, Labour was defeated, they could not introduce them and you are bringing them in via a short route. There was that element of trying to protect returning officers. It is part of our job, on a day-to-day basis, to make sure that elections are run correctly and smoothly and to make sure that that sort of criticism does not fall back upon them.

Going back to what Steve said there, there is no proof of the level of it, although, as I highlighted, it may be far higher than any of us think, so some sort of safeguard for our democratic system has to be there. The poll card is part of what we all do now anyway. Somebody said earlier on that everybody brings them because they think they have to. The truth of the matter is that on every poll card it says, "You do not have to bring this", because the Electoral Commission say we have to print it. The reason they did that was that several years ago voter turnout was going low, and it was thought that people might think that they have to have a poll card and, if that is the case, if they cannot find it they do not bother voting. The idea was, "This is affecting voter turnout, so we will tell them they do not have to bring it".

It causes problems for us as administrators, because if people bring their poll card with them the whole process in the polling station is far smoother and far quicker. It helps the voter and it helps the staff, so that was a backwards step, although, if we are honest about it, many of us might say we print that bit of print quite small, but it is on every poll card because it is a statutory requirement.

Q150 **The Chair:** I get a water bill and a council tax bill through my letterbox, but I do not get a telephone bill, a gas bill or an electric bill. Is that a problem, in terms of there being less evidence with name and address on a document.

Steve Daynes: In the model we adopted, you were not allowed to show your telephone bill on your digital device at the polling station, but you were allowed to print it off your device and then present that in paper form. The rationale behind it, if I get this right, is that I could have access to my father's gas bill and, therefore, I could go along and present

my father's gas bill with my father's poll card and then effectively vote as my father. Yes, you could argue that I could print it off, but it is introducing layers of surety and making it proportionate to what we are seeking to achieve. The important thing is that any measures that are introduced are proportionate to what our ultimate aim is.

Gordon Amos: It was a different system, but what I have to say is the idea for voters is to keep it relatively simple. People do not go to do things if it is going to be complex. They just do not bother going back a second time. The way in which we looked at it in Watford was to keep it relatively simple, and the number of alternative types of ID should be limited. There is no question about it.

The big stress, as you quite rightly pointed out with regard to our advertising, was to bring your poll card. If you brought your poll card, that is all you needed to do. That, as far as we were concerned as a security item, meant you were verbally confirming your name and address and you were bringing something that was delivered to your residential address within a recent time period. Therefore, if somebody has taken it, the police have somewhere to start investigations, unlike that case I referred to from way back in my history.

Q151 **Baroness Pidding:** My question has already been answered. It was about what impact you think voter ID pilots had on tackling fraud and the perception of fraud in elections. Would I be right in saying that you have all answered that already, unless anyone has anything to add?

Charlotte Griffiths: I would just like to add, going back to the previous questions, that throughout the whole registration and voting process there are some checks. With individual registration people now have to provide their national insurance number and date of birth to get on to the electoral register. There is a check with the postal vote applications; people have to provide their signature and date of birth. There are still no checks in the polling station. That still remains the weakest link in the voting process.

If you are going to truly confirm who that person is when they come to the polling station and vote, you can only do that with photographic ID, because you are guaranteeing that the person presenting in front of you is that person who you are going to issue the ballot paper to, who is listed on the register. Also, with doing that, you are not then trying to investigate something after someone has voted. Potentially, you might have an allegation that someone has misused a poll card, but that is after the election. That is then going into the realms of investigating after an election and potentially going down the petition route.

If there are any queries with the photo ID when someone presents it in front of you, you are dealing with it before they are issued with a ballot paper and before they cast that vote. That is where there is the distinction between looking at it before potential electoral fraud occurs or afterwards, to be honest. For us, it was doing it in the polling station.

Just to make reference to the issue of the future-proofing of the poll card, if you then start emailing to people, you do then lose the property link. A big play has been made on the fact that you have delivered it, but if it is sent electronically to somebody, you have no guarantee where that was sent and also where that person lives.

Baroness Pidding: Can I ask a slightly different question? Have any of the three of you any experience of someone turning up at a polling station with their form of ID or their polling card, et cetera, and there being an issue with it? How often has that occurred, where it is then taking your officials at the polling station quite a lot of time to try to sort that out? Does that person then get given a vote or not? Are there many cases of that?

Charlotte Griffiths: For us in Woking, in 2018 there were 99 people who either did not bring the correct ID or brought no ID. Of course, that then took time for the presiding officer to discuss with them what the requirements were. They had leaflets to give back to the elector saying, "This is what you need to bring", and then they were given the opportunity to come back to the polling station with it later. In terms of the feedback from polling stations, that did not give a significant delay to the overall process in the polling station, no more so than usual queries that we get from electors saying they are not on the register, which we have to deal with on a day-to-day election basis as well.

Steve Daynes: As far as Braintree is concerned, we did not have anywhere where the identity that was presented was rejected. We had 200 electors turn up at polling stations without the correct identification. They were sent away and all but 73 returned; 130 came back with correct ID and 73 decided that they did not want to make the second journey. There is no evidence, one way or the other, as to whether they did not have the correct ID or they just could not be bothered to return and it was their choice. They could have kept coming back with different pieces of ID until the close of poll. There was no limit on the number of times they could try, and our staff were briefed to look at everything in a sensible way.

Gordon Amos: In the case of Watford, in the two pilots, 194 and 209 voters turned up on the day without any form of ID, of whom the majority returned. On both occasions, ironically, as I said previously, 42 electors were declined their vote because they did not return for whatever reason.

The security aspect of it with poll cards is much stronger than you would think. As I said, because of the way it is, you could only use that poll card for that particular election. It was delivered to that address. The way in which my returning officer looked at it was that it was a proportional and adequate solution to what the problem was.

If we had ID cards in this country, there would be no problem, but we have not. Consequently, we are being asked to deliver something that is going to depend upon bringing in different forms of ID. It is very

complex. I am sure Steve's scheme was good and worked well, as indeed all of ours did, because we make them work well—that is our job—but from an elector's point of view, if you say, "You can bring one of 20-odd pieces of documentation", most people have stopped reading after the first two.

Having said that, if you look at the types of ID that were brought by the electorate, the picture driving licence nowadays has become the UK photographic evidence. There is no question about that. With the exception of poll cards, which our pilot was all based upon—virtually 90% of people brought their poll cards—it was picture driving licences. Passports, in comparison, were minute; there were less than half as many.

Q152 Lord Campbell-Savours: Mr Amos, you said before that there was no history of electoral fraud in your area, apart from the one incident you referred to. Is that the same for the other two witnesses? Have you had no history of electoral fraud?

Steve Daynes: I have no evidence of any in Braintree.

Charlotte Griffiths: We had an election petition in 2012, although that related to postal vote fraud. It was not linked to registration. We had a subsequent petition and we have had criminal prosecutions. Those were the known ones with the police.

Lord Campbell-Savours: In other words, all of these changes could be described as unnecessary, could they not? If you have had no problem with fraud, then, in your pilots, you have introduced these changes to deal with a problem that, in effect, did not exist. Is that fair?

Gordon Amos: As I said earlier, the potential for that is there.

Lord Campbell-Savours: I understand the potential but we are talking about whether there is a problem.

Gordon Amos: We do not know. Nobody knows because there are so many people and nobody proves that they have been to vote. Nobody is asked if they have been to vote. Nobody checks the polling register, except political parties. Those are the facts. The truth of the matter is there could be thousands of cases of personation at every national election, when the voter turnout is far greater.

The change in Northern Ireland was based upon that very crime. That is the reason why they had to change the system and have voter ID cards. This is historic. We have a very special democracy in the United Kingdom. I have spent my life devoted to it, but, by the same token, we need to protect it and ensure that it is kept safe.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Can I ask you one other little question? In our briefing here, we have four models: a photographic ID model, where electors had to bring one form of ID; a mixed ID model, where electors had to bring either one form of photo ID or two forms of non-photo ID; a

poll card model, where electors had to bring their poll card to the polling station; and a scannable poll card model. Which one of those would you prefer, with all your experience?

Charlotte Griffiths: I prefer the solely photographic ID.

Gordon Amos: I favour the scannable poll cards. If you come without your poll card and you have your driving licence, there is a solution there. In 2018, we included a named credit or debit card, so if you turned up and had forgotten your poll card but you had your credit card, you could use that. That was removed in the second one because it was not felt to be safe, but I do not let anybody have my debit or credit cards, and I think most people are the same.

Steve Daynes: Clearly, I favour the mixed model.

Lord Campbell-Savours: You favour the mixed model. You all have a different position, and yet none of you have had fraud in your areas.

Lord Hayward: Woking had a major fraud case.

Charlotte Griffiths: Yes. We had a petition in 2012 following the local elections. We have also had allegations going through one particular ward of Woking since I took over in 2005, so it is not unknown in our area. That is why we were on the Electoral Commission's list of areas at risk of electoral fraud.

Q153 **Lord Hayward:** You have covered a lot in relation to demographic groups that are less likely to have had issues with access to ID. You have identified a number of them between you. Are there measures to which you have not referred that might be needed to avoid disenfranchisement under a mandatory voter ID system?

Steve Daynes: Yes. Clearly, with some cultural headwear, such as hijabs and niqabs, the requirement for any form of identification to be done by a female then requires that every polling station has a female present. That can present returning officers with a challenge, especially if you have the designated female member of staff going sick on the Wednesday and there is the election on the Thursday; you suddenly have to shuffle your pack and get a female to a very rural location. It presents returning officers in heavily ethnic populated areas with significant challenges.

Charlotte Griffiths: I have a different perspective on that. From our set-up in the polling station, we considered having the mixed members of staff and, by and large, that was part of our requirement process and the management of the polling station staff. We ensured that we had mixed polling station teams available in all our polling stations. Likewise, there was the issue of people bringing the photo ID but perhaps not wanting to show their face in public.

Also, if someone presented to the polling station team and did not quite match the photo on there, which could have been for transgender reasons, we gave them an area in the polling station, away from the

issuing of the ballot paper but still within the room—it was screened off—so that the presiding officer could have a quiet word with the elector, discuss any discrepancy and view their face, away from the open polling station but still within the room itself. As I say, it was just away from the main issuing desk. We publicised that as well, so that people knew. The particular groups that might affect were advised that this provision would be in place, to make sure that anybody coming into the polling station knew that they would be able to have their ID checked and they would be able to feel comfortable to do so.

Gordon Amos: In the case of Watford, the poll card eliminated all of that. We put in place all those requirements. We had a high percentage of lady staff anyway to work for us at the polling stations, so we did ensure that every polling station had a lady there to do it. It was not necessarily the presiding officer or the manager at the polling station. It could have been one of the clerks, so then you are asking somebody in a bit of a less responsible position to make those checks on your behalf. It all makes it a bit more of a challenge for the polling staff.

That said, of course, if they brought their poll card, the risk was removed, because if that was delivered, they were asked the question, “Are you the person and the name that appears on the register?”, and if their confirmation was correct, they were issued with their ballot paper. You would not get disenfranchised just because you are transgender or whatever.

Lord Hayward: You all have elections of one form, and two of you of two forms, coming up, allowing for coronavirus, et cetera. Are you going to require any form of voter ID in the elections in a few weeks’ time or have you dropped it?

Charlotte Griffiths: No.

Steve Daynes: No.

Gordon Amos: No.

Lord Hayward: You have dropped it.

Gordon Amos: It was not so much a case of dropping it, but after December’s elections, there has been very little time.

Q154 **Lord Dykes:** Did you notice any impact on voter turnout or what we would call democratic engagement? Was there any local backlash against the need to bring ID to the polling stations?

Charlotte Griffiths: It is fair to say we structured our media strategy around an equalities impact assessment. We tried to identify all the relevant community groups in the area that could be particularly affected by the provision for bringing photo ID. We improved our engagement with the local groups. We did additional work with a homeless shelter and managed to get some homeless people on the electoral register, and issued them with a local elector card as well, which was an ancillary

benefit for them to coming to the polling station and voting. From our point of view, we felt that we built those good relations with those groups because of the pilot. We also worked with the CAB. It definitely strengthened our engagement efforts and raised the profile.

Overall turnout was not affected and, anecdotally, the leader of our council said, "I think actually the voter ID promotion you did probably increased the turnout, and we would not have had as high a turnout because there were not any contentious issues locally". From our point of view, the raw figures on turnout were not affected by running the ID pilot.

Gordon Amos: The same goes for Watford. The extensive advertising campaign increased the turnout at both the 2018 and 2019 elections.

Steve Daynes: As far as Braintree was concerned, I could not actually say that it increased turnout. We certainly did an extensive advertising campaign, both on social media and on the sides of refuse freighters. You could not go anywhere without seeing, "Bring ID to vote", but unfortunately we did have one very high-profile case. It was one of our electors who brought the case against the Minister for judicial review, so we got unwanted publicity from that. Somebody once said, "Any publicity is good publicity"; when I told my returning officer we were being named in a JR, he probably disagreed with that statement.

Charlotte Griffiths: From 2018 there was a lot more backlash on social media. A lot of it was self-moderating, because for all the negative comments that we received, we then had members of the public coming in in support of the pilot. We tried to let that rumble on in the background and only went in to correct factual inaccuracies, rather than wade into the pros and cons. In 2019 it was quite strange; because we had run it in 2018, there was not really a murmur on social media about the election. It was reminding people to come and vote and to bring their ID, but there was not the interest. We had run it once and now we were running it a second time, and it was like people knew that was what we were doing in Woking: "Bring your ID with you".

Gordon Amos: In Watford, following the 2018 election we had a by-election. One of our councillors was elected as mayor, so consequently there was a very fast by-election following it. The electorate were disappointed that the security aspect of the poll cards was not there; they actually complained. It was similar for the European election in 2019, although there was a different focus for that particular one. We encouraged our polling staff to say, "That is lovely. Thank you very much", but not to say, whatever they did, "You do not need that", because something was going to come and we did not want to discourage them. Clearly, there was public appetite for us to continue with what we had started.

Q155 **Lord Janvrin:** We have covered some of my question. It is about the arrangements made to assist voters who did not have the required ID. Could you each in turn say what arrangements were made, and then

whether there are any lessons or potential challenges with having to provide such ID when voter ID is rolled out across the UK? As a final point, how many local elector ID cards did you actually have to issue during the pilot?

Steve Daynes: For Braintree, we only had to issue one. Surprisingly enough, it was not the gentleman who brought the judicial review, although I was fully expecting it at five minutes to deadline. There is an opportunity there to clog the system up, should any group want to do so. However, we did not experience that. As I say, we only had the one application.

Lord Janvrin: You only had one because you had such a range of documents. Would you draw that conclusion?

Steve Daynes: I have no hard and fast evidence to support that. Of our electorate, 1,100 electors presented a poll card as part of their non-photo ID. That is not to say that 1,100 electors had not got the required photo ID. It is just that they chose to present whatever they presented.

Looking at the Electoral Commission statistics, they suggest that across all the pilots very low numbers of electoral identity documents were issued. Gordon and Charlotte will speak for themselves. The Braintree electorate, even though it is dotted around 60 or 70 different little parishes in the fields of Essex, is not any different to probably an urban electorate such as Watford or Woking. However, they would have difficulties in getting in if they were not digitally enabled to make those applications.

Gordon Amos: Similarly, in Watford, the numbers were not high. What we ensured with both the pilots, to ensure the enfranchisement of the electorate, was that the possibility was there to get a replacement poll card up until 9 pm on the day of poll. In actual fact, in 2018 we issued only four replacements in total. In 2019 it was slightly different. We issued, theoretically, 37. That was purely and simply on the basis that, as I said to you, one of the forms of ID that was acceptable in 2018 was a credit or debit card. If that had your initials and your surname or your full name and your surname on, that was an acceptable proof of ID, but it was told to us that that would not be acceptable because people give their credit cards to anybody to just touch and go, which I did not understand. Anyway, that was the position, so that may have been a contributor to the increase in that.

We know we replaced four in 2018 because it was quite a fraught process to get those replacements done with the technology, in order to get them reissued with the required QR codes. In 2019 that was simplified, but in both years we got calls from the public saying, "The dog has eaten my poll card", or whatever. We asked them, "Have you got some other form of ID?" Invariably, they said, "I have this". We said, "Are you happy to bring your passport?" and, if they were, we did not have to issue the replacement.

In 2018 four replacements were done. In 2019 there were 37 cancellations. That is not to say that there were 37 replacements. I do not have the number of cancellations in 2018, because they were just simply cancelled. I have the replacements for certain. The 37 cancellations were cancellations but not necessarily to have a replacement, because the people agreed that they had suitable ID.

Charlotte Griffiths: We issued 27 in 2019 and 63 in 2018. We issued our own photographic card with the elector's photo on there. We tried to make that process as accessible as possible. We offered to take photographs of people at the civic offices, but also did roadshows around the borough and promoted those. If people needed to get photographic ID, we could go around the borough, take a photo of them and then send them a hard copy or an email copy, to get that witnessed by somebody else. That was also available at the civic offices.

We also had a fully automated e-form system, where someone could do the whole process of uploading documentation to support the application process remotely, as well as sending us a photo that had been witnessed by somebody else electronically. We tried to make it as accessible from both ends for that application process.

When we were out in Woking taking photos, people were quite surprised. They said, "Can I do this now with you?" I said, "Here is the form. We will take your photo", and then all we needed to get it back was someone confirming that was their identity. From our point of view, it worked. This was an unknown situation when the pilots were first announced. When we first started promoting it, we had that trepidation: "Are people going to apply for these?" We then had applications coming in. It was quite interesting to see the demographics of the people. Anecdotally, from when we met them in the civic offices, there was not one particular category of people that was applying for them. It was a range of ages, male and female, who did not have the photographic ID that we were asking for.

We found that the system worked for us. Although we only issued 27 for 2019's pilot, because people had been issued with them in 2018, we wrote to them to advise that they were still eligible to be in force for the 2019 election, so we had more than those 27 in circulation for the election itself.

Q156 **The Chair:** In earlier evidence we have had, we have heard quite a lot about resources. As far as voter ID is concerned, did you need extra resources and support because of the introduction of voter ID?

Steve Daynes: Yes, we did. We needed additional resources. Because it was new and we are a rural community, we needed a heavy input from our communications team. We had a member of staff working pretty much flat-out for a couple of months on making sure that the message was getting out to all our outreach and remote locations. As I said earlier, by the time we finished, every house had had about three or four mailshots and we had advertising campaigns, so media was a massive

thing. If you go into a national campaign or roll out nationally, that is going to be dealt with centrally and you are going to see that on the adverts in "Coronation Street", more than likely. From that point of view, the resourcing is an issue.

On polling stations, I would agree with the colleague from Northern Ireland when she said that the actual checking of the evidence did not prolong issuing the ballot paper significantly. Yes, we had to train our staff to deal with this new issue of identification. For the first time ever, they were effectively in the position of challenging every elector coming in, saying, "Can I have your ID?" and then dealing with the conflict-resolution-type stuff, where the elector says, "I don't agree with this", and gets grumpy with them. That was an issue, but that was dealt with through an extended training session, which was 15 or 20 minutes on top of the normal training, and the staff did not find any problems with it at the polling stations.

Gordon Amos: It was a pilot. There is a request from the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission and various organisations to know what is being done, how it is being done and to keep all the proof and evidence along the way, so it does take more manpower. Certainly, that was the case for my team—the electoral services office—and communications, and, because it was a technology pilot, the ICT section needed to also be involved. We did, as a consequence of that, have an additional electoral registration member for the period of the project, and we also had to employ an IT technician.

You have to bear in mind that there was uncertainty and you had to ensure, from a returning officer's point of view, that all the risks were better than covered. In that regard, it was necessary to test all the polling station venues for internet connectivity and suchlike, so all of that went into it in Watford's example, although it was proven and developed further by 2019 that the internet connectivity was not a problem. We did not have to do the same sort of checking and testing the second time; only if a polling station had moved would that have been required, so that was all reduced. I would foresee those sorts of costings reducing as and when more and more of the pilots and the work became the normal function and practice. There was additional cost, but lots of it was because it was the pilot.

Charlotte Griffiths: Similar to what Mr Daynes has said, the promotion of the scheme was the bulk of our costs. From both of the photographic models and the mixed model, the emphasis is for the elector to bring the ID; the actual cost of the machinery of the election is minimal for introducing photographic ID. We purchased the ID card-makers in 2018 and could then use those again in 2019. We still have resources available to continue issuing those, because we are still getting applications from people who have heard about it and want to get an elector card, even though there is no real need for them. There were additional costs to it, but the ongoing costs for the checking in the polling station, having run it twice in two years, would be minimal, for the photographic ID model.

Q157 **Lord Campbell-Savours:** Can we just make clear that there are additional costs?

Charlotte Griffiths: Yes.

Lord Campbell-Savours: On national rollout, you have not been able to estimate what they might be.

Charlotte Griffiths: I have not estimated that, no.

Lord Campbell-Savours: None of you have done that, have you?

Steve Daynes: No, that is a matter for the Cabinet Office analysts.

Charlotte Griffiths: We provided that data.

Lord Campbell-Savours: You would provide the evidence.

The Chair: Have you been reimbursed for what you believe it has cost?

Charlotte Griffiths: Yes.

The Chair: What sort of money is that?

Lord Campbell-Savours: That is only for the pilots. The national rollout would be cheaper to roll out, would it not? We are trying to get a figure. You are not giving us any steer on that.

Charlotte Griffiths: Woking claimed £100,000 for the 2019 pilot, but £65,000 of that was on the media campaign, and the vast bulk of that was postage costs.

Steve Daynes: As far as Braintree is concerned, ours was, if memory serves, £105,000, but that also included a last-minute reminder two weeks prior to poll. Between poll cards going out and polling day, we sent another card saying, "Have you got your ID ready? Are you ready to go?" It was just another nudge. That £105,000 was coming at it from a cold start.

The Chair: Has there been any co-ordination and co-operation with the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission on implementing these pilots, and indeed fraternity between yourselves?

Gordon Amos: Yes. Following all the pilots, both the Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office have consulted with us and requested information in order for them to build what they believe to be the right sort of response and decide which is the best model to go with.

Charlotte Griffiths: In all the preparatory stages, we had regular meetings as a panel of piloting authorities, but also on an individual basis as well, working closely with the Electoral Commission and the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office, particularly, as the government department responsible for implementing the pilots, wanted to have the faith that we would deliver as well, and so were making sure that all our plans were robust, to support running in the elections.

Steve Daynes: It is fair to say that we worked collaboratively with both the commission and with the Cabinet Office. I am sure Cabinet Office colleagues will recall telephone and text conversations over weekends, trying to thrash out whether electoral identity documents should be on the photo ID list or the non-photo ID list. It all came down to the veracity of the supporting evidence. We have worked with them to develop all our models in a solid way.

Q158 **Lord Campbell-Savours:** I have a couple of questions. The Government have announced plans to go ahead with a rollout. What do you think will be the main challenges for this? What needs to be in place for it to be smoothly implemented?

Gordon Amos: Going back to where Watford stood at the beginning, we are back at the start now, because clearly my returning officer and the mayor of my authority felt that the need was there to protect all the vulnerable ones who would potentially lose their votes. I accept the voter ID card is there and that can be used as a means for that, but I take it back to where I started.

For people who are in those positions, it does not matter what requirement or what obligation is put on a returning officer or on a local authority to go out and find those. In a pilot, Woking was able to go and visit homeless shelters. In a normal election that was not a pilot, they are not going to be able to do that for every election that occurs. I am sure it will not happen. Consequently, those in those less prominent groups are going to fall out of the picture and are not going to have the representation that British democracy has given them thus far.

Steve Daynes: The challenge is to make sure that every elector has the ability to vote. Sadly, the electorate forget deadlines. They will hang on until deadlines. There is a national media campaign that says, "You have to be registered by midnight on 25 November". I have documentary evidence that there are people registering on 12.01 am or 12.02 am and then shouting at me, "But I registered". They started their registration process before, but they did not complete it until after, so they have left it to the last minute. That is going to happen if you get to photo ID.

I am not disrespecting anything that the photo model brings to the party. What I am saying is that there needs to be a get-out-of-jail, for when the elector has left it so late. Yes, it is the elector's fault, but within the industry, we are going to deal with this at the polling station, and there is still scope for a secure and a solid non-photo to back up the photo. I know Charlotte will disagree with me, but we have fallen out before over it and we will fall out again.

Gordon Amos: Every eligible elector gets a poll card. Every eligible elector under the Watford scheme is entitled to have that replaced up until 9 pm on the day of poll. We cannot do anything more to ensure that the electorate has the ability to cast their vote.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Can I ask Ms Griffiths a question? It is a

rather difficult question to ask and I will put it to you as delicately as I can. I could not quite hear it, but you said that you had had a problem in your area. Is essentially your problem among ethnic-minority voters, because I was looking on the internet while you were speaking, on my iPhone, and I see that you have a fairly multi-racial area? Is it essentially ethnic minorities?

Charlotte Griffiths: Where we had the allegations of fraud, they were in wards of the borough where there is a higher percentage of ethnic minorities.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Mr Amos, you said to us before that, if we had ID cards, there would not be a problem, but we do not have them.

Gordon Amos: That is correct.

Lord Campbell-Savours: If we had national ID cards, the problem would be solved.

Gordon Amos: Yes.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Indeed, we would not have to be sitting here today if we had national identity cards. Is that the view of your colleagues as well? Do you think that a national identify card would resolve all these difficulties with the photo ID and all the other identifiers on the card that would be available? Is that your view? It would be very helpful if you were to say yes. That is called leading the witnesses.

Steve Daynes: Yes, the national identity card would provide another form of identity at the polling station, so therefore would be helpful.

Charlotte Griffiths: It would be helpful. However, we have a scheme where each individual authority provides its own elector cards. That is a way round, because we already have a wide range of photographic ID that was accepted in the pilot.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Yes, but you would not have to do that, would you, if there was a national identity card scheme? You would not have to do any of that, would you?

Charlotte Griffiths: No, that is very true. Just following on from the question that was asked of my colleagues about the challenges for implementation, my concern would be about the rollout at a parliamentary election. That is the one thing. If you were going to introduce this straightaway at a higher-turnout election, that would cause considerable problems. If you are able to introduce it at a local election, which does, unfortunately but realistically, have a much lower turnout, that would enable any issues with that being rolled out to be addressed at that stage.

As I say, from a training point of view, if staff have a formal list of the ID that they need to check that is quite concise, the polling station staff can deal with this and implement it very well going forward.

The Chair: I understand what you are saying: you would like to see a set or two of local elections before another general election. In my brief period as a teller at the last election, it was quite evident that the local government electors were coming with the poll cards and the people who only vote at general elections were coming without, so I see your point. We have covered the ground; thank you very much indeed for sharing your views with us.