



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

John Pullinger
Chair, Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London
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17 July 2023

Dear John,

Many thanks to you and your colleagues for appearing before the Committee on 3 July 2023 and answering our questions on our current registration system and the implementation of voter ID changes at the local elections. Further to your oral evidence, I would be grateful if you could provide us with some additional detail on the following points:

Forms of automatic voter registration

1. The Committee has heard evidence that an automatic voter registration system may risk 'auto re-registration' of voters that may not wish to be registered. For example, those that may wish to be registered anonymously. How could an automatic registration system mitigate against this and ensure voters that wish to register anonymously can do so?
2. Has the Electoral Commission conducted any research into whether the public would support a move to a fully automatic voter registration system?
3. In our session on 3 July, the Electoral Commission indicated their support for linking registration of attainers to the issue of national insurance numbers. What needs to be changed in order for Electoral Registration Officers to be able to automatically update the register when individuals receive their national insurance number? Would an 'opt out' option be necessary to include on the form?
4. In our session on 3 July, we also spoke about the potential for the Electoral Commission to convene a working group to consider a 'roadmap' or framework towards how you may move towards an automatic system. Who would be essential to include in this working group and what would need to be considered to ensure its success?

Registration of 'the missing millions'

5. Those in social housing or private rented accommodation comprise some of the groups least likely to be registered to vote, particularly as they frequently move so their details are not up to date. How could the current system be changed to enable these individuals to register to vote?



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6. Local authorities have the power to fine individuals that are not registered to vote. Does the Electoral Commission have any evidence of fines having a deterrent effect and encouraging people to register? How often are fines issued by local authorities?

Postal voting

7. Does the Electoral Commission have concerns about the trend of increasing demand for postal votes? If so, do the upcoming changes to absent voting in the Elections Act 2022 exacerbate these concerns?

Local authority resource and finance

8. The Electoral Commission told us that the remaining provisions of the Elections Act 2022 could have a larger impact on Electoral Registration Officers than the roll out of voter ID. Are you aware if new burdens funding is being granted to local authorities to deliver the remaining changes?
9. It has come to our attention that local authorities pick up the cost for one-off postal vote applications for a UK general election. These costs have been generated entirely because of a UK general election but are not covered by elections funding. It is currently expected to be funded by the local authority as it is considered 'registration'. Who should be picking up these costs and is this a problem you are aware of?
10. What is your current assessment of the capacity of electoral service teams to deliver safe and secure elections? Does the Electoral Commission have sufficient power to intervene when it has a concern around the capacity or resource of an electoral services team to deliver its statutory duties?

Voter ID

11. Considering the turnout figures at the election, what is your estimate of the total number of individuals that were unable to vote as a result of the voter ID requirement, including those who may not have even attempted to vote?
12. The Electoral Commission's initial analysis included a public opinion poll which showed that 4% of people indicated, unprompted, that voter ID was the reason they did not vote. Please could the demographic breakdown of these results be provided to us to enable us better understand if specific groups were more affected by the voter ID requirement.
13. We have heard evidence that disabled people can find the registration process extremely difficult to navigate and that voter ID has added an additional layer of difficulty for some disabled voters. To what extent have you engaged with disability charities since 4 May 2023 about how voter ID may have impacted their voting experience?
14. Has voter ID improved public confidence in elections as expected and have you measured this?

We anticipate your full report on voter ID implementation in September 2023, which you have confirmed will address data on turnout, the impact of the voter ID requirement on certain



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demographics, and your recommendations to Government. We appreciate that some of the above questions may be easier to answer when the Commission has had time to gather further detail and data after the full report has been published. Therefore, we would welcome a response to our questions shortly after September 2023.

Best wishes,

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee