

AGENDA ITEM: 6b

CORPORATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

27th SEPTEMBER 2006

ELECTION PILOT 2007

**CMT MEMBER: RICHARD LONG, DIRECTOR OF LEGAL &
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To seek members instructions as to whether the Council should apply to take part in an election Pilot in May 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Council elections and the Mayoral election in 2007 be conducted as a traditional ballot.

BACKGROUND

3. The Council, on the 3rd May 2007, will be holding full Council elections and a Mayoral election. In addition there are also likely to be Parish Council elections. At present the elections will be conducted in the traditional method, i.e. the public attending a polling station and placing a cross on a ballot paper.
4. In an effort to identify different electoral methods, which could increase voter turnout etc., the Government have, in the past, sanctioned a number of election pilots. This Council has been involved in two such pilots. In 2002 the Mayoral election was conducted as an all postal ballot and likewise a European election was conducted as an all postal ballot across the north-east.
5. In May 2006 I sent a letter to all Councillors seeking comments/views as to whether the Council should consider applying to carry out a Pilot in respect of the 2007 elections. At the time, I advised members that I considered it unlikely that the Government would sanction a pilot that consisted of an all-postal ballot.

6. When considering pilots for the 2006 elections the Government's suggested ideas were:-
- ◆ innovations to improve access for electors, including early voting, mobile voting and alternative polling locations;
 - ◆ the provision of enhanced voter education and awareness material, including freepost election communications for candidates;
 - ◆ innovations to improve the security of the election, e.g. use of barcodes, signature checking;
 - ◆ piloting the provisions including within the Electoral Administration Bill e.g. the ability to cancel and re-issue ballot papers, pre-election cards for all electors, the use of ballot papers without counterfoils;
 - ◆ innovations to improve administrative efficiency e.g. electronic counting of traditional and/or postal ballots.
7. There has been no response from members suggesting that the Council should be seeking to undertake a Pilot. Officers have duly considered the issue and are of the opinion that in view of the fact there are new statutory provisions in force relating to elections, also this is the first time the Council has held full Council elections and a Mayoral election on the same day and the fact that this is the first major election since the Council had new electoral software installed, the Council should not be seeking to take part in a pilot.

AUTHOR: R. Long
Director of Legal and Democratic Services and Returning Officer
Telephone: 729782