

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Date: WEDNESDAY, 21 MAY 2003 at 6.30 p.m.

****Please note time of meeting****

**Room C
2nd Floor
Civic Suite
Lewisham Town Hall
London SE6 4RU**

**Enquiries to: Mike Brown
Telephone: 020-8-314-8824 (direct line)**

MEMBERS

Councillor Eytle	(L)
Councillor J Houghton	(L)
Councillor Huntbach	(LD)
Councillor Maslin	(L)
Councillor Massey	(L)
Councillor Smith	(L)

Members are summoned to attend this meeting

**Barry Quirk
Chief Executive
Lewisham Town Hall
Cattford
London SE6 4RU
Date: 13 May 2003**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The public are welcome to attend our committee meetings, however, occasionally, committees may have to consider some business in private. Copies of reports can be made available in additional formats on request.

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ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR	
Key Decision		Item No. 1
Ward		
Contributors	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003

Recommendation

To appoint a Chair for the municipal year 2003/04.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS	
Key Decision		Item No. 2
Ward		
Contributors	CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003

Members are asked to make any declarations of pecuniary interests or other interests they may have in relation to items on this agenda (if any). Members are reminded to make any declaration at any stage throughout the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Report Title	COMBINING THE GLA AND EUROPEAN ELECTIONS IN 2004 - PRESENTATION		
Key Decision			Item No. 3
Ward			
Contributors	HEAD OF LAW		
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003	

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	BID FOR PILOT STATUS	
Key Decision		Item No. 3
Ward		
Contributors	HEAD OF LAW	
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003

Summary & Purpose

This report presents a proposal for a bid to the ODPM for pilot status in any forthcoming local by-election. The bid is for an all-postal ballot with a modified declaration and safeguards to protect secrecy and prevent abuse. The bid, if approved, needs to be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for a statutory instrument to be made allowing alternative voting procedures. The views of the political parties are reflected in the report.

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 note the position of political parties in relation to this proposal as set out at paragraph 7;
- 2.2 approve the proposal attached at Appendix 1 for submission to the ODPM for pilot status;
- 2.3 delegate to the Head of Law the power to make any minor amendments to the proposal, if so requested by the ODPM or so advised by the Electoral Commission; and
- 2.4 to delegate authority to the Head of Law to commission independent research from external contractors as set out in paragraph 4 of this report.

3. Why a Pilot?

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is the report submitted to the

Governance Select Committee on 21 January 2003. That report set out a proposal for pilot status and the reasons for submitting a bid. The main concern addressed in that report is low turn-out at elections in Lewisham and the primary purpose of the bid would be to seek to improve voter engagement in the electoral process. The report also recognises the genuine concerns held in some quarters about the need to protect confidentiality, the prospect of possible intimidation and the need to maintain security. As set out in Appendix 1, the proposal contains measures to address those concerns. Members' attention is drawn to the entirety of Appendix 1.

3.2 The Governance Select Committee endorsed the report attached at Appendix 1 subject to the following comments in relation to the postal poll and drop-in stations. The minutes of the Select Committee meeting state:

3.3

"The Committee said that there should be clear instructions to voters to post the form in good time, a contingency plan for the event of a postal strike, measures to ensure that visually impaired voters were not disenfranchised, advice given to voters on ensuring the privacy, independence and safe delivery of their vote and reassurance of the anonymity of the ballot, despite the presence of a signed declaration."

All of these points would be taken on board in the arrangements if the pilot bid is successful.

4. Key features of the proposed bid

The bid is set out in some detail in Appendix 1. However, the key features of the proposal are as follows:

- all votes to be cast by post
- a modified declaration signed by the elector but without a requirement for a witness
- a user guide and application for postal votes to be sent to all voters
- drop-in centre (s) on election day for electors preferring not to use the post
- independent research after the election by a reputable external organisation covering at least 10% of those who purported to vote to check whether in fact they have done so.

5. The Criteria for a Successful Bid

The ODPM set out criteria for application. They are reproduced below. Under each heading appear details of how the Council's bid would meet the criteria.

a) The precise nature of the proposed scheme to be set out

The key features are set out in paragraph 4 above with more particular detail in Appendix 1. Whilst the area in which any by-election were to take place would not affect the all-postal nature of the ballot, the number and location of drop-in centres might vary according to the nature and number of electors in it. Wherever the by-election might be called, there would be at least one drop-in centre and possibly more.

The user guide has yet to be drafted but officers would intend to use plain English, make it user friendly, consult with the Electoral Commission on the detail and make it available in several languages. It would also include details of how to register for a more permanent postal vote together with a tear-off application form to do so. The Electoral Commission and ODPM have already proposed that, subject to approval of the bid, they would be happy to meet with officers to discuss the detail of the arrangements more closely.

Members' attention is drawn to the proposal for independent research after the poll to be conducted by a reputable external organisation to verify whether those who purported to vote actually did so. This is set out in paragraph 6(3)(c) of Appendix 1.

b) Practical steps envisaged to make it work

The Council would make the usual administrative arrangements entailed in the conduct of an election and draw up a detailed time-table for each of the steps entailed. If the bid is approved, then the following actions will be taken to address practical issues:

- i. draw up terms of reference for external agency to conduct research and set in place arrangements to commission; identify two/three key questions to be asked of voters canvassed by them; award contract as soon as possible;
- ii. address publicity campaign using in-house communications unit and devising a number of communication channels to publicise the postal pilot using posters, plasma screens in Council outlets, the Council's website, information points;
- iii. draft advice leaflets for voters and liaise at the earliest opportunity with Royal Mail for the delivery of the ballot papers and advice notes; liaise with the Plain English Campaign to ensure crystal mark status for the document;
- iv. prepare contingency plans for delivery of advice leaflets and ballot papers - using canvassers if Royal Mail fails to deliver, e.g. in the event of a postal strike; liaise with Royal Mail for contingency arrangements for collection of ballot papers in the event of a strike; ensure advice leaflets available in different languages and in braille, large print, tape on request;

- v. as soon as an election is called, arrange with elderly persons' homes, if any, in the area for collection of ballot papers;
- vi. identify drop-off points for use on election day (as soon as vacancy arises); identify back-up in the event of the drop-off point being unavailable for any reason;
- vii. make the usual arrangements for the count including recruitment of staff, identification of place, giving them all appropriate notices and training appropriately in the pilot procedures;
- viii. liaise throughout with Electoral Commission as appropriate at all stages.

An indicative timetable appears at Appendix 2.

c) Satisfactory arrangements to overcome practical difficulties

These are addressed in the above paragraph and include for example, contingency plans in the case of a postal strike, and alternative drop-in places being available in the event of non availability of first choice. In addition it would be proposed that in-house print arrangements be available in the event of non-delivery by external contractors of ballot papers or advice leaflets.

d) Indication of costs or savings

These are identified in Appendix 1. Additional costs of approximately £5,600 are identified but this reflects and includes the cost of independent research and the issue of the voter guide which would include promotion of postal applications generally. It is also based on an assumption of an enhanced turnout of 40%. Costs would of course increase for postage, the more successful the pilot is in enhancing turnout.

e) Details of previous innovations piloted

The Council previously ran an all-postal ballot for its Mayoral Referendum in October 2001, when turnout was approximately 18.3%. However, it is submitted that it might be possible to achieve higher turnout where the vote relates to the election of identifiable people rather than the expression of a preference for a model of governance with no person yet identified. Further, the pilots from 2002 show that a better turnout in postal elections comes where local authorities have a track record of this sort of ballot and whether voters are familiar with it. A further postal ballot in Lewisham would be a big step on the way to establishing that track record

f) A statement that the Council believes that the voters will not be disadvantaged by the proposed scheme

The Council believes that the voters will not be disadvantaged by the proposed scheme. On the contrary, the Council believes that the voter will be able to participate in the election in a more convenient way and that the measures to safe-guard security, confidentiality and prevent abuse, are robust. There will be increased accessibility to the electoral process and anyone wanting to attend at the drop-in centre to deliver their postal vote in privacy will be able to do so.

- g) That the opportunity for fraud will not be enhanced and the secrecy of the poll will be maintained

The Council believes that its proposal does not enhance any opportunity for fraud and this is explored in detail in Appendix 1. Further, anyone wishing to cast their vote in privacy may do so at the drop-in centre.

- h) Statement of benefits which the Local Authority expects to see being delivered by pilots to provide a benchmark for evaluation

At the last two by-elections held in Lewisham both of which were conducted by traditional polling methods, the turnout was 27% and 29% respectively. We would hope that an all-postal pilot as proposed could achieve a noticeable improvement on that. The primary purpose would have to achieve would be enhanced voter turnout of at least 35%. Additionally, the Council is of the view that the following benefits would result:

- i. improved flexibility and choice - voters could vote by post or drop-in,
- ii. more straightforward voting for postal voters with a simpler modified declaration,
- iii. less voters disenfranchised as a result of confusion in relation to the declaration. There should be less rejected postal votes as a result of incomplete or wrongly completed declarations. This also makes for easier administration of the count;
- iv. the pilot creates an opportunity for promotion of postal vote take-up for subsequent elections using the voter guide and tear-off application form;
- v. the election would be more accessible because it would be more convenient to vote by post for those unable to attend at polling stations; accessibility will also be increased by collections from elderly persons' homes;
- vi. security should be maintained at at least the same level as with a traditional vote; the research to be commissioned to take place after the poll would provide useful additional data to establish whether fear of perceived fraud is substantiated

6. The view of the political parties

The Council has sent a copy of its proposal to all the political parties. Copies of all responses appear at Appendix 3.

7. Financial Implications

These are set out in paragraph 6(3)(g) of Appendix 1.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The conduct of local elections is highly regulated. There is no scope in law to conduct local elections other than by traditional voting methods in accordance with primary legislation (for example, Representation of People Act 1983), and regulations made thereunder, e.g. Local Elections (Principal Areas) Rules 1986.

8.2 However, the Representation of the People Act 2000 was introduced to allow authorities to submit to the Secretary of State proposals for a scheme to modify particular local government elections in the area. The Secretary of State has power to make a statutory instrument to implement the scheme in so far as he considers appropriate. The scheme can deal with issues such as when, where and how voting at elections takes place and/or how the votes cast are to be counted

8.3 The Secretary of State will consult the Electoral Commission about the proposed scheme and if a statutory instrument is made, then the Council must publish the Order. Once the election takes place, the Electoral Commission, by law, will prepare a report including an assessment of the scheme's success or otherwise. That assessment must include a statement by the authority as to whether in their opinion:

- a) the turnout of voters was higher than it would have been if the scheme had not been applied
- b) voters found the procedures provided for their assistance by the scheme easy to use
- c) the procedures provided for by the scheme led to any increase in personation or other electoral offences or in any other malpractice in connection with elections
- d) those procedures led to any increase in expenditure or to any savings by the authority.

The Electoral Commission's report once received, must also be published by the authority within three months of the date of declaration of the result of the election.

8.4 The Secretary of State's order may only be made by statutory instrument. The draft statutory instrument containing the order has to be laid and

approved by resolution of each House of Parliament. The time taken by this process is too long to be achieved after a vacancy has arisen and prior to the statutory date by which the election must take place. It is for this reason that if an application is to be made in respect of any forthcoming by-election, it must be done in advance of any vacancy arising.

9. Equalities Implications

There are specific measures set out in the proposal to make engagement in the electoral process easier for disadvantaged groups. For example, arrangements to collect votes from elderly persons' homes are included. Drop-off centres will also offer assistance for those seeking it. It is proposed that these centres should have in attendance officers from Electoral Services on election day to offer assistance if necessary. The drop-off centres will have access for disabled people. In addition it is also proposed that the advice leaflet be produced in other languages and on tape and in large print.

10. Crime & Disorder, Environmental & Human Rights Act Implications

There are no specific implications in relation to any of these matters.

11. Conclusion

For all of the reasons set out in this report and taking into account the views of the political parties, it is recommended that the proposal for pilot status in the event of a local by-election being called be submitted to the ODPM for approval. It is also recommended that the Head of Law be given delegated authority to progress the application and to make any minor amendments recommended by the ODPM and/or Electoral Commission.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

<u>Short title of Document</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>File Location</u>	<u>File Ref</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>	<u>Exempt Inf.</u>
Report to Gov. Select Cttee	21.1.03	Gov. Support	Minute Book	Ian Williamson	N/A

If there are any queries on this report, please contact Kath Nicholson, Head of Law, on extension 47648.

APPENDIX 1

REPORT TO GOVERNANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2003

Committee	Governance select committee	Item no.	3
Title	Possible bid to pilot alternative electoral arrangements		
Wards	All wards		
Contributors	Chief executive		
Class	Part 1	Date	21 January 2003

Attached is a briefing from the head of law on a possible application to pilot alternative electoral arrangements in 2003, as requested by this committee at the meeting of 28 October 2002.

Committee	Governance select committee
Title	Minutes of meeting of 21 January 2003
Class	Part 1

1 Attendance and apologies

Present were Councillors Paul Maslin (chair), David Britton, Les Eytley, Matthew Huntbach, Madeliene Long, Parmavir Singha and Alan Smith.

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter Dawson.

Present under standing orders were Councillors Barrie Anderson and Mark Morris.

Also present was the head of law, Kath Nicholson.

2 Minutes of meeting of 7 January

The minutes of the meeting of 7 January were agreed and signed as a correct record.

3 Declaration of interests

No interests were declared.

4 Possible pilot of alternative electoral arrangements

The head of law presented her paper to the committee (circulated separately from the agenda and therefore appended to these minutes). She answered questions, and the committee discussed issues, arising from the report.

It was agreed to follow the recommendations of the report in not pursuing e-counting or e-voting options at this stage. The discussion of the committee therefore centred on the practicalities of postal voting and strategic questions of increasing turnout versus other aims of electoral methods.

It was agreed to endorse the recommendations of the report, subject to the comments of the committee on the conduct of the postal poll and drop-in stations. The committee said that there should be clear instructions to voters to post the form in good time, a contingency plan for the event of a postal strike, measures to ensure that visually-impaired voters were not disenfranchised, advice given to voters on ensuring the privacy, independence and safe delivery of their vote, and reassurance of the anonymity of the ballot despite the presence of a signed declaration.

5 Draft year-end report

The committee discussed whether to add a section to the report on the effect of the directly elected mayoralty on the governance of the council. However it was agreed that it was too soon to assess this and that it should be looked at during the coming year.

The committee agreed to insert into the report their conclusions agreed under item 4 above.

6 Items to be referred to the Mayor and cabinet

There were none.

A BID FOR PILOT STATUS IN THE EVENT OF A LOCAL BY-ELECTION

1 Summary

This report deals with proposals for a bid to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to put in place pilot election procedures in the event of a local by-election being called. It sets out options and recommends a bid for an all postal ballot with a modified declaration requiring no witness signature, enhanced voter information, and research after the election to assess the success or otherwise of the pilot.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of the Governance Select Committee some options for a bid for pilot status in relation to any local by-election called with a view to increasing turnout at that election.

3 Recommendations

The Select Committee is asked to comment on the proposals set out in this report and to refer the matter to the Elections Committee for decision.

4 Background

4.1 Low Turnout

It is a central concern of the government nationally, and the Council locally, to make the democratic process more relevant to the electorate. It is only necessary to look at the turnout at recent elections to show that large proportions of the local community do not exercise their democratic right to vote. For example, at the General Election in 2001, the turnout in Lewisham was only 51.3%. At local elections, the turnout is even lower. At the May 2002 councillor elections, the turnout was only 25.5%, with by-elections in October 2002 in Lee Green and November 2002 in Downham producing turnouts of 29.2% and 26.9% respectively. Put baldly this represents only half of those entitled to vote in Lewisham exercising that right at the last General Election; and less than three out of ten doing so at local elections.

4.2 Pilot schemes to date

To try to address this, the Government has run pilot programmes in an attempt to modernise elections and to make electoral processes as straightforward as possible. Their aim in doing so is to try to encourage participation in the elections, widen the range of voting methods, improve the efficiency of counting methods and increase the information available to voters.

Pilots were first introduced outside London in 2000. The programme was expanded in May 2002, when 30 authorities across the country piloted innovative electoral processes. The pilots are summarised very briefly in Appendix 2. They

ranged from the use of electronic voting, both in polling stations and from remote locations, electronic counting, postal voting (with or without declarations or modified declarations of identity, telephone voting, voting by SDS text message, mobile voting, extended voting hours or combinations or some or all of these).

Where a pilot involved the use of new technology for e-voting, etc., the Government offered financial and other support in the procurement and distribution of the e-voting equipment.

Following the May 2002 elections, the Electoral Commission reviewed the pilot programme and commented as follows:

- the pilots successfully widened the choice of voting methods;
- they were generally well managed;
- the pilots secured significant increase in turnout in some areas;
- there were concerns in some areas of increased risk of fraud but no evidence of fraud was found;
- technology based pilots had no significant impact on turnout but did increase choice and flexibility;
- those in areas where the pilot related to postal were more positive about the new methods of voting than elsewhere;
- postal voting improved voter turnout.

5 **Pilots 2003**

5.1 Because of the success of the programme in May 2002, the ODPM issued a further prospectus for more pilots at the local elections in May 2003. The ODPM has indicated that the Secretary of State will be looking for schemes which:

- make voting more straightforward to the public;
- make elections more accessible either:
 - by making it more convenient to vote;
 - by making voting more attractive to people currently less likely to vote
- make the administration of elections more cost effective and efficient
- maintain or increase the level of security at elections.

- 5.2 The OPDM will consider whether appropriate management arrangements are proposed, whether there is broad cross party support for the scheme, though it is acknowledged that this may fall short of unanimity. There is a preference for schemes which cover at least several wards or indeed a whole authority.
- 5.3 The conduct of the pilot scheme and its outcome will be evaluated by the Electoral Commission who will publish a report after the election to allow the outcome of the various pilot schemes to be compared.
- 5.4 In Lewisham there are no elections scheduled to take place in 2003, so it was not possible for the Council to submit a bid for a pilot scheme to have effect in May. For those authorities like Lewisham without an election in 2003, it would only be possible for a pilot scheme to be run if a by-election were to be called. However, there is insufficient time for a pilot bid to be made and approved once a casual vacancy arises. The process for approval of pilot arrangements requires a statutory order to be made and this is extremely difficult to achieve in the time between the vacancy arising and the by-election.

To resolve this conundrum, the ODPM have indicated that they will now consider applications for schemes which would be used in the event of a by-election being called.

5.5 Application criteria

The application criteria require the Council to set out:

- the precise nature of the proposed scheme;
- the practical steps envisaged to make it work;
- arrangements to overcome any practical difficulties
- an indication of the costs or savings
- details of previous innovations piloted
- a statement that the Council believes that the voters will not be disadvantaged by the proposed scheme
- that the opportunities for fraud will not be enhanced and that the secrecy of the poll will be maintained
- a statement of the benefits which the authority expects to see being delivered by the pilots to provide a benchmark for evaluation.

- 5.6 It has been made clear by the ODPM that there will be no financial support for pilots except those involving e-voting or e-counting, and for any pilots which do involve e-voting or e-counting, the Government will centrally procure contracts for authorities to use. That process is under way now.

6 **The Options for Pilot Schemes in Lewisham**

6.1 E-voting

It would be possible for the Council to submit a proposal for a scheme that involved e-voting either at polling stations or remotely. There was some experience of this during the May 2002 pilot programme (e.g. Newham and Liverpool). The Electoral Commission, in their report on that programme, commented that such solutions offered enhanced flexibility and choice for the electorate. However, they also noted that technology based solutions did not appear to have a significant impact on turnout. According to the Electoral Commission, pilots using on technology based solutions seemed to be most successful in familiarising voters with the possibilities for new voting methods.

As any Council bid would relate only to a by-election in a ward, which would only be identified a matter of weeks before the election would be held, it is suggested that an e-voting pilot would not be appropriate. The practical arrangements would have to be put in place at very short notice with little opportunity to prepare the ground for the new voting method. Further, as Appendix 1 shows, the cost of e-voting solutions is high with little proven impact on turnover. The effort involved in implementation of e-voting in an elections involving only one ward is likely to be disproportionate.

6.2 E-counting

The Council's first experience of e-counting was gained at the GLA elections in 2000, and further experience will be gained at the next GLA elections next year, when the votes are to be counted electronically. It is suggested that there would be little gain by the introduction of e-counting at a local by-election.

There would be an extremely short time to set up such arrangements after a casual vacancy arose and experience will be gained in any event at the GLA election; also, the counting method would have no effect at all on turnout. In addition, the average electoral roll per ward is in the region of 8,000. Even were a 40% turnout achieved, less than 4,000 votes would be counted at a by-election, and results are generally declared within a couple of hours after the close of poll. For these reasons it is not proposed to submit a scheme involving e-counting in this instance.

6.3 Postal voting

The Council could submit a proposal that any local by-election called be conducted entirely by post. Currently, without pilot status, postal votes are given only to those who request them. Otherwise votes are cast in the traditional way by attendance at a polling station.

a) Increased turnout

Evidence from the May 2002 pilots shows some impressive improvements in pilots who conducted elections by post. For example, Chorley doubled turnout to 62%; Crawley increased from 27% to 34%; Eden in Cumbria increased turnout to 37%; Gateshead went up to 54% from 29%; Havering increased from 34.7% to 45%; North Tyneside went up to 42% from 36%; N.W. Leicestershire went up to 33.5% from 28% and Stevenage increased to 58% from 29%. However, this increased was not universal. In Hackney for example, the turnout decreased and in Greenwich, though there was a slight increased in turnout, it was not seen as significant. Though there will be factors specific to the particular areas which affect the turnout, there is a growing body of evidence that all postal voting is likely to have a positive effect on turnout.

Further in the Electoral Commission's report on the 2002 pilots, it is argued that this is likely to increase further where a track record of postal voting is established, as the local electorate becomes familiar with it as a voting method.

b) Perception of lack of security

Some concern has been expressed that there is a lack of security in all postal voting. Although the Electoral Commission found no evidence of this in May 2002, they acknowledge it as a real concern and any pilot would have to show that it is no less secure than the traditional polling station.

c) The declaration

Existing law requires that for a postal vote to be counted it must be accompanied by a declaration signed by the elector and witnessed. If either signature is missing the vote does not count. Much confusion arises about the declaration with many votes being invalidated because of incomplete, incorrect or missing declarations. The purpose of the declaration is to provide confidence in the integrity of a postal vote – that the person voting by post is entitled to do so. Yet no check is made (or can be made in the normal course of events) that the signatures are genuine.

Some argue that this renders the postal vote process open to abuse. Neither is there any check at the polling station that the person attending to vote is the person they purport to be. Only if a second person attempts to vote under the same name would there be any indication of potential abuse, and the incidence of this is minimal.

Evidence from the Electoral Commission shows (e.g. Hackney and South Tyneside – see Appendix 1) that many thousands of votes are lost because of problems with the declaration. It is acknowledged that completion of the declaration is a complicated process and that the disenfranchisement of so many who do not complete it correctly outweighs the perception of security it is intended to stimulate.

The Council could propose that the declaration be abolished entirely in a pilot bid. However, perceptions of a lack of security in postal voting did feature in a number of the May 2002 pilots and officers suggest that abolition of the declaration entirely may increase this perception. It is possible that the declaration could be simplified and the requirement for a witness to sign could be done away with without increasing the risk of abuse.

Where such measures were used in May 2002, as well as a positive impact on turnout, the count was administratively simpler and quicker.

In order to assess whether there had been any difficulties with security issues, it could be proposed that after the election a piece of research be done by a reputable organisation (e.g. the Office for Public Management) whereby telephone calls could be made to, say, a 120% sample chosen at random from those who voted by post to ascertain that they did actually return their vote themselves.

d) A lack of secrecy

Some argue that the casting of votes by post can mean that electors could be subject to pressure because they do not have the privacy of the ballot box in which to exercise their right to vote in secret. Whilst there is no evidence available of such intimidation, it would be possible to allay these concerns by providing drop off points on election day where voters could complete their declaration and their ballot paper and drop them off in private so whilst there would be no formal polling station and the voter would need to bring their ballot paper and declaration form with them, an opportunity for secrecy would be afforded to all.

e) Accessibility

Any pilot bid would need to demonstrate that it had taken into account the impact of the scheme on disabled people. However, if drop in point(s) are arranged for election day, the same assistance could be offered to disabled voters there as at a traditional polling station, and being able to vote by post may alleviate matter for those who have difficulty getting to a polling station. Additionally arrangements could be made for collection of votes from residential homes, etc.

f) Publicity for all postal pilots

The Council would not need to produce poll cards in the event of an all postal vote, but it would be required to produce a voter guide in plain English to explain the new process. It would be possible for an application for a postal vote for all elections to be appended to this guide to encourage postal voting at future elections where there is no pilot. If this form is completed it could be returned with the ballot paper and declaration and actioned automatically by the Election Registration Officers.

g) Cost issues

The cost of a traditionally run election (excluding the Council) in a typical ward is set out below:

Hire of Polling Stations	£1,200	
Presiding Officers	£1,200	
Polling clerks	£1,560	
Polling cards	£650	
Stationery/fitting up etc.	<u>£500</u>	
Total		<u>£5,130</u>

The cost of an all-postal ward election (based on an optimistic assessment of turnout of 40%) would be:

Outing postage (100%)	£2,700	
Incoming postage (40%)	<u>£1,080</u>	
	£3,780	
Publicity (instead of poll cards a user friendly voter guide:	say	£5,000
Research	say	<u>£4,000</u>
		<u>£9,000</u>
Total		<u>£12,780</u>

h) A summary of an all-postal bid

- All votes cast by post
- Drop in centre(s) on election day
- User guide and application for postal votes to be sent to all voters
- Independent research after the election by contacting 10% of those who voted to assess success or otherwise in security issues.

6.4 Different voting times

It would be possible to submit an application for pilot status on the basis of different voting times, for example voting hours being extended to include voting over several days, or altered so that the polls were open at a weekend instead of the usual Thursday.

The only experience the Council has of alternative voting times was “early voting” at the GLA elections when polling stations set up in busy shopping centres across the borough were open for three days including at the weekend in addition to a normal Thursday poll. Lewisham’s experience would seem to indicate that this had no significant impact on turnout, although it undeniably offered more choice to the electorate.

Altered and extended voting times for the May 2002 pilot did not seem to produce positive results either. However, the only way to assess the impact now would be to pilot it. The costs associated with doing so would depend on the extent of any additional requirements for polling station and staff.

The cost of running a traditional election set out in paragraph 6.3g) is based on the use of six polling stations for one day. If, say, the poll were held on a Sunday instead of a Thursday there would be little or no additional cost, although this would obviously not be the case if Sunday voting were additional to the normal Thursday vote.

7. **Crime and Disorder, Environmental, Human Rights Act Equalities Implications**

There are no specific implications save those identified in the report.

8. **Financial Implications**

The costs associated with an electoral pilot would depend on the nature of the pilot. There is provision in the Election Lewisham budget of approximately £10,000 for by-elections per annum. If an all postal ballot were put in place as set out in this report, that would exhaust the element

of the budget for by-elections for that year. There would then be no provision if a further by-election were called. Also, the higher the turnout, the higher the cost as much of the expenditure is on postage.

9. **Legal Implications**

The legal implications are referred to in the body of the report.

10. **Conclusion**

If the prime aim is to encourage voter participation, it appears likely that the type of pilot with the best chance of success is with a postal pilot although alternatives are set out in this paper. The next stage would be to consider all parties and to refer the matter to the Electoral Commission for a decision bearing in mind the responses of the political parties.

THE PILOTS - MAY 2002

Appendix 1

Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other
Basingstoke (population 153000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watermark on ballot paper; Simplified declaration; New style poll cards with tear off application for postal vote 	overall, marginally more; postal votes doubled	equal	no evidence	simplified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count easier because simpler declaration fewer ballot papers rejected
Bolton - Whole Council (population 270,000)	Touch screen in polling stations - leased for election from Powervote	yes up 6% to 32% (possibly because of publicity on new method)	much more £180,000	no evidence	standard	Counting easy , but counting of postals determined the time of declaration of result
Chorley - Whole Council (population 100,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All postal Drop in centres Electronic count Used ES&S 	yes, turnout doubled to 62%	? £150,000 (more)	no evidence (perception that open to abuse)	none	three recounts in one ward confidentiality thought to be issue
Crawley	All postal in 4 wards 5 collection points on polling day	yes, from 27% to 34%	more because of	no evidence	standard	

			postage			
Crewe & Nantwich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional poll plus internet voting in 2 wards - from any computer - 2 schools + library gave open access computer • BT/Oracle 	no	more - internet supplementary to traditional poll	no evidence	standard	
Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other
Eden, Cumbria - 1 ward	All postal	yes 37%	equal	No evidence	standard	High level of rejected ballot paper because of 'confusing' declaration
Epping Forest	Electronic count	Neutral	n/a	no evidence	standard	
Gateshead 22 wards (Electorate 151,000)	All postal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no polling stations - no declaration of identity - watermarked ballot paper - votes counted centrally with DTL 	yes up to 57.4% from 29%	less by 9%	no evidence	none	

Greenwich 2 wards (population 21,2000)	All postal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no polling stations 2 drop-off points 	yes but "not dramatic"	equal	no evidence	Simplified	
Hackney (population 200,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All postal for combined locals and Mayoral referendum ERS 	down to 31.9% - wards vary from 44% to 24% EC say due to different party campaign	161,000 (less than traditional poll)	no evidence	Standard	almost 3000 ballot papers rejected and 900 posted after polling day – 15% ballot papers delivered to Town Hall
Havering 18 wards	Borough wide all postal - ERS	yes from 34.7% to 45%	?	no evidence	Standard but single envelope	almost 1800 (2%) invalid because of declaration
Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other
Hyndburn	Council paid for delivery of election address for each candidate	no significant increase	up by £10,000	no evidence	Standard	some party support withdrawn during process
Kerrier - 1 ward	postal or hand in at drop-in centre on election day	yes 41.7%	more	no evidence	Standard	
Liverpool	Multi channel voting in 2	up in 1 ward	more -	perception	Standard	VRN & PIN and

	wards - telephone - internet - SMS text - postal - polling stations - electronic count	down in 1 ward <u>but</u> high take up of new methods		that it was open to fraud, (not necessarily sustainable) particularly re distribution of poll cards		candidate names on poll cards - 2 hours training for poll station staff on use of technology - technical hiccups on polling day - checks in polling station caused delays - recount because of discrepancy
Middlesborough (population 142,000)	All postal in all wards	yes up from 31% to 42%	equal	perception that open to fraud	Standard	- 1500 rejected ballot papers because declaration (3.5%)
Newham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Borough wide touch screen at polling stations early voting (including weekends) Mobile voting Use of different languages electronic counting No paper/pencil use in polling station 	slightly down (ERC think may have fallen further without pilot)	£1.4million (£650,000 from DTLR - balance from Council)	no evidence	Standard	- delays at polling because of checks & queries - early declaration despite technical glitches at count - no spoilt papers
Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other

	"Sequoia" and Strand Business Systems					
North Tyneside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All wards Postal Bar code ballot paper 19 Delivery points 	yes, up to 42% for Mayoral and up from 36% to 42% for Councillors	No details	no evidence	standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3000+ spoilt papers because of declaration 1000 late
NW Leicestershire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All postal Chemical 'watermark' 	yes, up from 28% to 33.5%	higher because of postage arising from higher turnout	no evidence	Simplified No witness	few spoilt papers
Rugby (electorate 68414)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic count DRS 	not applicable (although up 6%)	£217,000	no evidence	standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> few spoilt papers half the time usually taken to count
Sheffield 3 wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/3 election multi channel polling stations SMS text Internet Public access/info 	up by between 4-7% (only slightly more than cross-Sheffield)	more than £610,000	no evidence but perception of scope for abuse	standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> polling card was glossy A4 with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VRN - PIN - Password - Instructions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kiosks electronic register 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> some voter confusion queues because of delay at polling stations
Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other
St Albans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/3 election Postal electronic at 4 polling stations plus one supermarket Internet Telephone BT/Oracle 	no, slight decrease	£1.07 million	no evidence, although scope was a concern	standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no method to cast unplanned vote on 2/5 count was fast no spoilt papers
Stevenage (population 78,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All wards postal No declaration 	yes, up from 29% to 53%	a saving (£58,000 compared to £65,000)	No evidence though some concern about security	None	concerted promotion of postal voting
Stratford on Avon (population 114,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authority wide electronic voting and counting. Powervote Touchreen in polling station 	yes, slight increase to 42% but only consistent with national trends	£167,000	No evidence but perception of scope for fraud and	standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queues at polling stations because of delays Negative media coverage after poll

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 counting centres 			lack of secrecy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local ambivalence More choice as opposed to increased turnout
South Tyneside (population 115,000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All wards All Postal No witness needed for declaration Electronic count Delivery points ESS 	yes, significantly up from 27% in 2000 to 54.7% (doubled)	£240,000 - but higher turnout meant unit cost was lower	no evidence but "scope if individual determined"	no witness required	1900 (3%) votes rejected because of declaration problems – double envelope
Where	How	Increase in Turnout?	Cost	Malpractice	Declaration	Other
Trafford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All postal 13 drop-off centres No witness needed on declaration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53% compared to 33% in 2000 [more than other locals in area using traditional methods] 	£189,000 (2002) = (£1.21 per head) compared to £93,900 (2000) = £1.70 per head)	no evidence but clearly risk factors to be considered	Individual declaration but no witness needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive feedback Public concern re confidentiality More than 2000 rejections because of declaration Count: labour intensive and lengthy
Wandsworth	Polling hours extended	no, down from 39% to	more by	no evidence	standard	-

	from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. (instead of 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.)	29%	£11,000			
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APPENDIX 2

INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

**Suggested Statutory/Proposed Timetable – Assuming election held
19th June 2003**

Statutory Date	Proposed Date	Time	Description
Wednesday 9th April 2003			Last date to be added to the register for this election.
Wednesday 14th May 2003			Publication of NOTICE OF ELECTION
	Thursday 15th May 2003	6pm	Meeting with Election Agents
Thursday 22nd May 2003		NOON	Last day for delivery of NOMINATION PAPERS
Tuesday 27th May 2003		NOON	Last day for publication of STATEMENT AS TO PERSONS NOMINATED
Wednesday 28th May 2003		NOON	Delivery of Notice of Withdrawal of Candidature
Wednesday 28th May 2003		NOON	Publication of Notice of Election Agents
	Thursday 29th May 2003	5pm	Approval of Ballot Papers for Printing
	Wednesday 4th June 2003		Last date for electors to notify change of Address/Appoint Proxy
	Friday 6th June 2003		Delivery of Ballot Papers
Wednesday 11th June			Publication of NOTICE OF POLL
	6th - 19th June 2003		VOTING PERIOD
	12th - 18th June 2003		Daily opening of covering envelopes and verification
	13th - 19th June 2003	5pm	Application for replacement ballot papers if not received by 13th June 2003
Thursday 19th June 2003			POLLING DAY

	Thursday 19th June 2003	9am	Final opening of covering envelopes, verification and counting of ballot papers
	Thursday 19th June 2003	11am/4p m	Adjudication of doubtful ballot papers
	Thursday 19th June 2003	6pm	CLOSE OF POLL and Final Adjudication Ballot Papers
Thursday 24th July 2003		NOON	Last day for delivery of returns as to Election Expenses

APPENDIX 3

POLITICAL PARTIES' RESPONSES

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	VOTER REGISTRATION WEEK	
Key Decision		Item No. A
Ward		
Contributors	HEAD OF LAW	
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003

1. Voter Registration week took place between 29 March to 4 April 2003. The purpose under Education's Target 9 (Promote Active Citizenship Among Young People) of the Local Public Service Agreement (PSA) was to register to vote as many young people as possible with particular focus on 16/17 year olds.
2. Citizenship is a new National Curriculum subject in schools to increase knowledge, skills and the development of values linked to democracy. Voter registration is important because it is part of the process by which a young person becomes an active and engaged adult.
3. There were four high profile events during the week involving The Mayor, Councillors and staff from Electoral Services, Communications, School Improvement Team and the Youth Service.
4. Major Events:

Saturday 29 March	- Stall in Lewisham Shopping Centre
School	
Monday 31 March	- Presentation by the Mayor at Sedgehill
Sydenham	
Monday 31 March	- Presentation by the Deputy Mayor at
	School
Wednesday 2 April	- Presentation by Councillor Donnelly at
Deptford	Green School
5. On Monday 31 March, a ballot box, registration forms, leaflets and posters were delivered to all secondary schools and colleges throughout the Borough. The campaign was promoted throughout the week. The ballot boxes were collected on Friday 4 April and all the application forms processed.

6. The campaign resulted in an increase of 245 new registrations of 16/17 year olds living in Lewisham onto the current register of electors and another 72 registrations for electors over the age of 18. We also accepted 273 application forms that were forwarded on to various other authorities (see appendix A).
7. Following the success of the campaign, it is likely that a similar event, perhaps with a higher profile, will be organised for later this year.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE			
Report Title	SEEKING VOTER'S VIEWS		
Key Decision			Item No. B
Ward			
Contributors			
Class	Part 1	Date: 21 MAY 2003	

Following the merge of Electoral Services and Legal Services Divisions in December 2002, it was deemed necessary to introduce a customer satisfaction questionnaire, which would be sent out with every new registration form.

This exercise started for the month of April, asking for comments set out in the table below:

The analysis for the month of April is as follows:

FORMS SENT	285	FORMS RTND	120	% RTND	42.1%	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	POOR	N/A
taken to answer the telephone						60 replies 50%	32 replies 26.7%	10 replies 8.3%	4 replies 3.3%	
The courtesy shown by the member of staff						65 replies 54.2%	36 replies 30%	6 replies 5%		
Helpfulness and service given regarding your enquiry						67 replies 55.8%	28 replies 23.3%	11 replies 9.2%		1 reply 0.8%
Quality of the service provided						56 replies 46.7%	39 replies 32.5%	8 replies 6.7%	1 reply 0.8%	3 replies 2.5%

The CSQ forms are being amended for the next month's analysis, due to the fact that some of the calls are re-directed via the switchboard and this may have a bearing on the results (see Appendix A)

In order to maximise on the exercise and update our records, the information contained on the reverse of the form requests information on previous residents within the property (see Appendix B). The information would be used to ensure the records on the current Register of Electors are correct.