

Report of: Chief Executive

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 8 February 2017

Subject: Safeguarding the Integrity of the Elections Process

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: N/A		
Appendix number: N/A		

Summary of main issues

1. Sir Eric Pickles MP published his paper 'Securing the ballot', following his review of electoral fraud in August 2016.
2. At their meeting on 14 September, Council requested a report for Executive Board, setting out what actions are necessary to ensure we continue to safeguard the integrity of the election process in Leeds.
3. The Electoral Commission has since published a response to Sir Eric's paper.

Recommendations

1. That Members have regard to the comments made by the Electoral Services Manager in the table of recommendations attached at Appendix A.
2. That Members be reassured that the Electoral Services Manager will ensure that the Electoral Services Section continue to provide a high level of service to the electorate, delivering an accessible, transparent and secure election process for the people of Leeds.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the actions already undertaken by the council's Electoral Services in relation to the 50 recommendations published in Sir Eric's 'Securing the ballot' paper.
- 1.2 To identify any further actions which could be taken to ensure we continue to develop the integrity of the election process in Leeds.

2. Background information

- 2.1.1 As part of his role as Anti-Corruption Champion, Sir Eric Pickles MP undertook a review into electoral fraud, resulting in the publication of his paper 'Securing the ballot' in August 2016.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545416/eric_pickles_report_electoral_fraud.pdf
- 2.2 Sir Eric's paper makes 50 recommendations as to how the current electoral system can be improved.
- 2.3 The recommendations are an important contribution to the ongoing national debate about how to tackle electoral fraud and improve confidence in elections in the UK.
- 2.4 Electoral Services officers welcome Sir Eric's paper and any opportunities it brings to enhance the current elections processes.
- 2.5 This report sets out the work that Leeds already does and will continue to deliver, and identifies new work that officers will now develop in line with Sir Eric's recommendations.
- 2.5.1 The Electoral Commission has also published a response to Sir Eric's paper.
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/216294/Analysis-of-recommendations-from-Pickles-fraud-review.pdf
- 2.6 Some of the new measures officers are able to introduce are as a result of improved support from the Electoral Commission following the publication of their response.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 A summary of the 50 recommendations can be found on pages 4-5 of the white paper.
3. The recommendations are also listed in the table found at Appendix A. This table includes comments from Electoral Services officers as to what is already being done, and what improvements can be made.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Not applicable.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 Improvements identified as a result of the publication of Sir Eric's paper will help bolster voter confidence in the electoral process and may encourage those who

have previously not engaged in the electoral process to do so.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 This does not affect the council's budget and policy framework, although ensuring the electorate of Leeds have the utmost confidence in the electoral process does support the council's aims to be the best city for communities

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 There is no significant impact on the Electoral Services budget.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 Further reducing the risk of electoral fraud will also help lower the risk of challenge to an election by way of an electoral petition.
- 4.5.2 There are no call in implications within this report.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 Any new control measures identified will be added to the risk register at the time of an election or referendum.
- 4.6.2 All risks are reviewed at meetings of the Project Board in the months leading up to each poll using templates developed and provided by the Electoral Commission.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Sir Eric's 'Securing the ballot' paper is an important step towards tackling electoral fraud and improving voter confidence in the electoral system.
- 5.2 The council's Electoral Services officers are dedicated to ensuring the security of the ballot.
- 5.3 It is vital that voters are able to exercise their fundamental right to vote in secret and without interference or undue influence, and that campaigners and others understand there can be no place in elections in Leeds for behaviour which prevents voters freely exercising those rights.
- 5.4 Electoral Services officers will continue to look for ways to improve, and participate in any consultation relating to the amendment of legislation to do this.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That Members have regard to the comments made by the Electoral Services Manager in the table of recommendations attached at Appendix A.
- 6.2 That Members be reassured that the Electoral Services Manager will ensure that the Electoral Services Section continue to provide a high level of service to the electorate, delivering an accessible, transparent and secure election process for the people of Leeds.

7. Background documents¹

None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.