

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE – 8 SEPTEMBER 2008

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**CONSULTATION ON THE GOVERNANCE OF BRITAIN – ELECTION DAY
– WEEKEND VOTING**

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Committee to determine a County Council response to a consultation paper issued by the Ministry of Justice inviting views on whether voting could be made more convenient by moving the Election Day from Thursday to the weekend and on the best way to do this.

Background

2. On the 24 June the Ministry of Justice issued a consultation paper on this matter, a copy of which is attached as Appendix A to this report. The deadline for responses is 26 September, 2008.
3. The consultation questions are as follows:-
 1. Do you think that polling day should be:
A weekday
A Saturday
A Sunday, or
Take place over both Saturday and Sunday?

Please tell us why.
 2. Who would be affected by changing the voting day to a weekend and how?
 3. Do you think that greater access to advance voting in polling stations should be made available alongside weekend voting? Please explain why.
 4. Do you think that greater access to remote voting (whether through traditional postal voting or by electronic means) should be made available alongside weekend voting? Should such arrangements be explored even if polling day were not moved to the weekend? Please explain why.
 5. What do you perceive to be the benefits and the drawbacks of remote e-voting?

6. Should the Government pilot weekend voting before introducing it across the UK?
7. What other issues may arise if the polling day is moved to the weekend? What are the issues for:
 - Resources?
 - Polling station venues?
 - Security?
 - Administration of the election?
8. If weekend voting is introduced for local government elections, do you agree that the normal time for holding these elections should be moved from the first Thursday in May to the second weekend in May?

If not, please explain which weekend you believe it would be most appropriate for these elections to be held and why.
9. Are you aware of any barriers which prevent individuals from voting? What are the issues and how can they be overcome?

Resources Implications

4. A decision to move to weekend voting could increase significantly the costs incurred by the County Council. At the moment many staff are granted a day's leave to enable them to undertake election duties. There will be pressure to adjust election fees to reflect this as well as the unsocial hours weekend working would entail.

The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on this report.

Recommendation

5. The Committee is asked to determine how the County Council should respond to the questions posed in the consultation paper.

Background Papers

6. Consultation Paper – see Appendix A attached.

Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure

7. None.

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Relevant Impact Assessments

Equal Opportunities Implications

8. Annex B to the Consultation Paper sets out an Equality Impact Assessment – Initial Screening.