

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions arising from this consultation paper.

Question 1
<p>Do you think that polling day should be:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> a weekday,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> a Saturday,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> a Sunday, or</p> <p><input type="radio"/> take place over both Saturday and Sunday?</p> <p>Please tell us why.</p>
Question 2
<p>Who would be affected by changing the voting day to a weekend and how?</p>

Q1. Do you think that polling day should be: a weekday, a Saturday, a Sunday, or take place over both Saturday and Sunday?

The Panel were concerned that voter turnout on weekends would be affected by both days being a Sabbath. Weekends were also leisure days for much of the public who would be less inclined to vote during their time off. Councillor J Markham thought that politics needed to be made more attractive to voters; currently there was a lack of interest. The Panel noted that there would be resource problems in having weekend voting with increased staffing costs, it was also believed that any change to the voting arrangements may be met by public hostility and that consequently, this would lead to a fall in turnout.

Q2. Who would be affected by changing the voting day to a weekend and how?

Members commented that religious observance would be affected by weekend voting, and there would be a reduction in the number of party members who would be available for canvassing during the immediate run up to the election. The Assistant to the Chief Executive advised the Panel that there would be difficulties in booking polling stations and bookings would be at a premium on weekends, and schools would be closed as well. Postal voting arrangements would also be a problem on weekends. Those public buildings that could be utilised would also be using up energy which would not otherwise be used because those premises would normally be closed at weekends. This would have environmental consequences. Councillor J Whitehouse informed the Panel that some European countries had voting on Sundays. However he felt that staffing in this District would be a problem. The Panel were also advised that some voters may be disenfranchised by a limited access to public transport at weekends. There would also need to be a police presence and this would be more expensive on Saturdays and Sundays.

Question 3
Do you think that greater access to advance voting in polling stations should be made available alongside weekend voting? Please explain why.

Question 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.

Q3 Do you think that greater access to advance voting in polling stations should be made available alongside weekend voting? Please explain why?

Members felt that there was already a certain amount of confusion regarding polling days coupled with a general mis-understanding about postal voting. This scheme may well cause more confusion.

The Panel was advised that there was no evidence from previous pilots that voter turnout was enhanced through this scheme. There were other considerations such as security of ballot boxes. These would have to be stored at the Civic Offices and transported to and from the polling stations if both Saturdays and Sundays were voting days. The cost may not justify the additional turnout. There would be added problems of public transport access in remote areas.

Q4. 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?

The Panel believed electronic voting posed a security risk and that this might heighten the public anxiety in relation to postal voting. There was concern about the costs and the lack of a clear audit trail for such voting methods. However it could be an attractive voting method to younger generations.

Question 5
What do you perceive to be the benefits and the drawbacks of remote e-voting?

Question 6
Should the Government pilot weekend voting before introducing it across the UK?

Q5. What do you perceive to be the benefits and the drawbacks of remote e-voting?

Electronic voting could not be used by voters without access to computers. There had been similar problems with Housing Services' Choice-Based Lettings Scheme.

Q6. Should the Government pilot weekend voting before introducing it across the UK?

The Panel thought that a pilot should take place. The Panel's view did not detract from the Council's opposition to the principle of weekend voting. The Panel took the view that a pilot should take place for a single type of election to avoid confusion.

Question 7
<p>What other issues may arise if the polling day is moved to the weekend? What are the issues for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resources? • polling station venues? • security? • administration of the election?
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Question 8
<p>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?</p> <p>If not, please explain which weekend you believe it would be most appropriate for these elections to be held and why.</p>
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Q7. 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?

The Panel were advised that staff covering weekend voting would be entitled to enhanced rates. Staff already worked a full week and some may not wish to volunteer to cover a weekend election. Ballot box security would pose a security problem.

There were issues surrounding the burden of cost if weekend voting went ahead. Under normal circumstances, the District Council paid for its own elections with a government allowance in Rate Support Grant. In the case of County elections, the District Council was reimbursed, similarly reimbursement applied to European Union elections. Parish Councils would be expected to have some difficulty in financing a weekend election. There would also need to be a review of the election timetable.

Mr S Hill advised the Panel that Saturday post mailings were usually quite sparse, there was no post on Sundays. The District Council was expected to accept postal votes up to the deadline.

Q8. If weekend voting is introduced for local government elections, do you agree that the normal time for holding 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.

The Panel thought that the second week in June would be better than the second weekend in May, because of potential clashes with school holidays in May. The Panel was also advised that election clashes with major sporting events could be a problem as well.

Question 9

Are you aware of any barriers which prevent individuals from voting? What are the issues and how can they be overcome?

The Government welcomes any and all contributions which will be used as the basis for the citizens' summit considerations.

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise

Q9. Are you aware of any barriers which prevent individuals from voting? What are the issues and how can they be overcome?

The Panel did not believe there were many physical barriers to voting, the main barriers were the perceptions which many people had of politicians and democracy in general. The Panel also felt that particularly amongst younger generations, there was not enough education regarding the voting process. Citizenship classes, mock elections in schools and the Youth Council can all make a contribution to general awareness of political issues. A councillor added that the current electoral system made election results dependent on perhaps 100,000 votes cast in marginal seats across the country, an election being decided by a relatively small proportion of votes.

Rural polling station accessibility was a growing problem. This was linked to limited public transport links or a complete absence of them.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (eg member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

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