



NORWICH
City Council

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 2000

EVALUATION REPORT BY NORWICH CITY COUNCIL ON PILOT SCHEMES FOR THE MAY 2000 ELECTIONS

**John Turner
Returning Officer**

July 2000

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT 2000

EVALUATION REPORT BY NORWICH CITY COUNCIL OF THREE PILOT SCHEMES HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MAY 2000 ELECTIONS

1. Introduction

The Council received approval to undertake three pilot schemes in conjunction with the City Council elections in May 2000. The elections were for one-third of the Council, i.e. 1 vacancy in each ward. The schemes were:

Scheme	Comment	Whole or part
All postal ballots	Use in two wards to compare turnout both with previous elections and with similar wards at the same elections	Two wards
Early voting	Use in all wards to compare turnout with previous elections	Whole
Mobile polling stations	Use in all wards to compare turnout with previous elections	Whole

2. Legislation

The power to conduct the pilots was contained in the City of Norwich (Pilot Schemes) Order 2000. The order was made on 23rd March and came into force on the following day, i.e. the date of the Notice of Election. The lateness of the Order including the first sight of the draft presented severe difficulties to the Returning Officer and the Project Team in terms of making the necessary preparations and logistical arrangements for the pilots. This was particularly true in respect of advance publicity.

3. Consultation

In terms of the choice of wards for the all postal ballot pilot, the Council delegated power to the Returning Officer, the Leader of the Council (Labour) and the Leader of the Minority Group (Liberal Democrat). Before any decision was made, the Returning Officer consulted the other four political parties (Conservative, Green, Legalise Cannabis Alliance and Natural Law) that had contested the City Council elections in May, 1999. As a result of the consultation, representations were made by the Conservative and Natural Law parties and a meeting was held with representatives of the former. The two wards chosen, Bowthorpe and Catton Grove, were done so on the basis of traditionally having extremely low turnouts at the last elections and which did not fall into the categories of being either marginal or politically sensitive. Both wards were held by the Labour party and, in both cases, there was no political objection to using either ward.

4. Publicity/Media Coverage

The local media and the Council's own publication, the Citizen, which is delivered to each household in the City, were used to explain the concept of the pilot schemes to the electorate. In addition, leaflets were delivered by the Returning Officer to each elector with the poll card (only the leaflet in the case of the all postal ballots). A local radio advertising campaign was also used to particularly advertise the availability of the early voting stations.

Media coverage of and interest in the pilots was extensive and the Returning Officer gave a significant number of interviews to the regional television stations (Anglia and BBC), local and national radio (Radio Broadland, Radio Norfolk, Radio 4 and Radio 5) and to the regional and

local papers (Eastern Daily Press and Evening News).

5. Outcome/Statistics

All postal ballots

Both wards had a marked increase in turnout. Bowthorpe ward increased from 18.3% to 30.7% (an increase of nearly 68%) and Catton Grove ward from 21.1% to 31.4% (an increase of nearly 49%). From being two of the lowest wards for turnout in the City, they moved to being higher than the City average of 29.3% and were among only four wards which showed an increase in turnout from the 1999 elections. In both cases, the holding party retained the seats.

Early voting

Early voting on Thursday, 27th April was held in 15 polling stations (one for each ward with an additional station shared between two wards). Voting took place from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. 1968 electors voted, representing 2.52% of the eligible electorate. The spread ranged from 9.26% in Eaton ward to 0.88% in Coslany.

Early voting on Saturday, 29th April was held at City Hall. Voting took place from 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. 513 electors voted bringing the total for early voting to 2481 (3.17% of the eligible electorate). The spread ranged from 9.88% in Eaton ward to 1.2% in Coslany and Mile Cross wards.

Mobile polling stations

Two mobile polling station teams equipped with suitable vehicles and the necessary equipment made visits to 91 electors who were, therefore, able to vote in their homes. This meant that every applicant for this service cast their vote.

6. Evaluation

Evaluation of the pilot schemes have been carried out in seven different areas. These areas are detailed below:-

Turnout comparison with previous years

Details of turnout for City Council elections in recent years are set out below:

Year	Turnout	Compared with previous year
1994	42.45%	
1995	39.90%	-2.55%
1996	35.19%	-4.71%
1998	27.93%	-7.26%
1999	28.98%	1.05%
2000	29.29%	0.31%

Turnout comparison with other authorities

Data has been collected from nine similar authorities to Norwich to enable comparisons to be made about turnout and trend. The data is set out in the following table:

Authority	1999	2000	Trend
Norwich	28.98%	29.29%	Up
Basildon	24.37%	25.10%	Up
Cambridge	29.80%	29.80%	-
Great Yarmouth	31.40%	32.00%	Up
Harlow	29.90%	30.40%	Up
Ipswich	31.20%	30.30%	Down
Lincoln	28.79%	24.36%	Down
Oxford	29.20%	31.10%	Up
Stevenage	29.67%	30.45%	Up
Waveney	31.70%	30.90%	Down

Financial evaluation

The full financial evaluation of the pilots is shown at Appendix 4, the estimated additional cost being some £25,000. In essence, the costs were significantly greater for all three pilots than the cost of "traditional" elections. The cost of the all postal ballots was some three times the cost of running the usual election in the two wards while all the costs for early voting and mobile polling station represented increased costs because they were additional or enhanced services.

The significant items of additional expenditure were in respect of:

- Staffing for issue and receipt of postal votes (£4100)
- Early voting - premises and staffing costs (£7765)
- Publicity and printing (£11095)
- Postage costs (£1725)

Satisfaction and comments by candidates and agents

A survey by questionnaire was undertaken after the elections of all 22 election agents some of whom were also candidates. Replies were received from 14 (64%). An analysis of the replies is attached at Appendix 1.

Effectiveness of alternative polling arrangements including issues relating to security and secrecy

An independent electoral consultant, Colin Marshall, was engaged to undertake an analysis of arrangements before and on polling day. A detailed report of his findings is attached at Appendix 2.

Comments of voters and non-voters

The University of East Anglia was engaged to undertake a survey of voters and non-voters. A questionnaire was sent to over 1200 electors. The report of the findings of the survey is attached at Appendix 3.

Views of Presiding Officers

Presiding Officers were asked to complete a questionnaire about their experiences on polling day including early voting and the mobile polling stations. In terms of early voting, most electors who commented expressed favour with the additional options and convenience. Most Presiding Officers commented adversely on the low turnout and some made the point that we were not attracting additional voters but simply making it more convenient for existing ones.

The reports from the Presiding Officers for the mobile polling stations were extremely positive and generally reflected the fact that those using the facility thought it to be a great improvement and much appreciated this option.

Assurances/Approach

In applying to undertake the pilot schemes, certain assurances were given, namely, that:

- a) no voter will be put at a disadvantage;
- b) any opportunity for fraud is countered; and
- c) in all cases, the secrecy of the ballot is maintained.

The Returning Officer is pleased to report that he believes that all of the above were duly met in the conduct of the pilots.

Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to conduct these three pilots without considerable contributions from many individuals. It is impossible and potentially unfair to single out individuals but I would wish to place on record my appreciation of the efforts of the Project Team, the staff of the Elections Office, the staff of the Administration and Office Facilities Service Grouping of the Council and all those people who acted as presiding officers, poll clerks and counting assistants. I would also wish to record my thanks to the agents, candidates and representatives of the political parties who played their part in ensuring the success of the pilots. Finally, my thanks are due to all those who assisted in the preparation of this report and, in particular, Colin Marshall and Stella Hart for their independent contributions.

Conclusions

The main lessons to be learnt from this exercise are that:

a) only the all postal ballots improved turnout;

b) the cost of all postal ballots could be significantly reduced if changes were made to the legislation to allow greater automation of the process. In particular, removal of the following matters would assist this aim:

- the need for a declaration of identity and the extra envelope required for that purpose;
- the requirement that each ballot paper should be separately stamped with the official mark at the time of issue;
- the need for each ballot paper to have a counterfoil.

c) all postal ballots allow results to be announced earlier (the verification stage is not required at the count);

d) mobile polling stations should be seen as a social service as well as an electoral service. In that light, it is worth doing;

e) early voting may be more successful if it is conducted in the area and at the weekend;

f) the legislation is required at least three months before the election;

g) conducting pilots led to a slight increase in turnout for these elections in Norwich. Had they not been run, particularly, the all postal ballots, I suspect that the turnout would have decreased again;

h) conducting pilots does not necessarily mean that turnout will increase (other similar authorities also recorded increases without any pilot schemes);

i) the fundamental and underlying problems of low turnout are unlikely to be solved by changes to the election system alone.

John Turner

Returning Officer

July 2000

Ref: JWT/amp.piloteva

APPENDIX 1

PILOT ELECTION SCHEMES

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF AGENTS

PILOT ELECTION SCHEMES RESULTS OF SURVEY OF AGENTS

All 22 agents for the elections were sent a questionnaire asking them to comment upon the effect of the pilot schemes. 14 responded which represents a 64% return rate. Their answers are analysed below.

Question 1 - How effective do you think the pilot schemes were in terms of increasing turnout and encouraging participation?

	Very	A little	Not at all	A negative effect
All Postals	64%	29%	7%	
Early Voting		18%	73%	9%
Mobiles		58%	42%	

Question 2 - How effective do you think the publicity was for the pilot schemes?

Very	A little	Not at all
14%	64%	22%

Question 3 - Do you think it would be worth trying any of the pilot schemes again?

	Yes	No
All Postals	86%	14%
Early Voting	18%	82%
Mobiles	67%	33%

Question 4 - What effect did the pilot schemes have on your normal political activity?

	Severe	A little	Not at all	A positive effect
All Postals	7%	31%	31%	31%
Early Voting	22%	39%	39%	
Mobiles	8%	17%	75%	

Please expand on any issue relating to the effect on political activity:

Issues raised included telling difficulties (3 respondents), possible fraud with postal votes, difficulties to voters because the poll cards were A4 in size and not printed on card.

Question 5 - How satisfied were you with the information which you received

about the pilot schemes?

Totally	Partially	Not at all
50%	43%	7%

Question 6 - Are there any other types of pilot schemes that you would wish to see tried and, if so, what are they?

Electronic voting - 4 respondents

Postal voting only - candidates' addresses sent out with postal vote

Compulsory voting

Incentives for voting (reduction in Council Tax or cash payment)

Question 7 - What was your overall impression of the pilot schemes?

Positive	Neutral	Negative
42%	42%	16%

APPENDIX 2

CONSULTANT'S REPORT

NORWICH CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS – 4TH MAY 2000

CONSULTANT'S REPORT

Introduction

- 1.1 I was engaged by the Returning Officer to undertake an analysis of the arrangements for the election pilots before and on polling day. My report covers, amongst other things, the effectiveness of the alternative polling arrangements including issues relating to security and secrecy.

Home Office Approval

- 2.1 The application to undertake pilot schemes was submitted to the Home Office on 11 January 2000.
- 2.2 Although the Home Office gave preliminary approval for the pilot schemes on 14 February 2000, The City of Norwich (Pilot Schemes) Order 2000 was only made on 23 March 2000. The Order came into force on the following day, i.e. the date of the Notice of Election.
- 2.3 The letter giving preliminary approval was subject to the Representation of the People Bill completing its passage through Parliament. The Home Office stated that the Returning Officer should proceed on the basis that the early voting, mobile voting and all postal voting schemes would receive final approval.
- 2.4 It was difficult for the Returning Officer to make more than preliminary arrangements before the Order came into force as any delay in the Representation of the People Bill receiving Royal Assent could have caused acute embarrassment for the Returning Officer and more particularly for the Home Office.

Findings

Any extension of the pilot arrangements for future elections should give much longer lead in time to enable full administrative and publicity arrangements to be undertaken.

Election Pilot Project Team

- 3.1 The Returning Officer established an election pilot project team, which, under his chairmanship, comprised members of the Elections Office, Administrative Support Service Unit, Computer Services and the Head of Communications. The project team met on a regular basis from the end of January and called in other "specialist" officers as and when required. At the first meeting, the Returning Officer outlined the background to the applications to the Home Office and to the proposed consultations with the Labour Group and the other political parties.
- 3.2 The project meetings regularly discussed developments of the election projects, were made aware of the political discussions and considered and agreed the detailed administrative arrangements.

Findings

Elections do not just happen. Although the statutory election timetable only spans a few weeks there is a considerable lead-in time in making all the detailed preparations. The three pilots for all postal ballots, early voting and mobile voting imposed considerable additional work and responsibility on the Returning Officer and his staff. The establishment of an election pilot project team enabled the projects to be undertaken without any major complications and ensured that all the additional administrative arrangements were covered. The establishment of a project team for any further pilots is recommended.

Consultation with Political Parties

4.1 The choice of the wards for the pilot schemes was to be agreed between the Returning Officer, the Leader of the Council (Labour) and the Leader of the Minority Group (Liberal Democrat)

4.2 The Returning Officer also consulted the other four political parties (Conservative, Green, Legalise Cannabis Alliance and Natural Law) that contested the City Council elections in May 1999. Letters, including a copy of the detailed application for the pilots, was sent to election agents. The letter sought the views of the parties as part of a wider consultation process. The original consultation referred to voting on Sunday 7th May in two wards. In the event the Home Office did not approve the pilot Sunday voting and no further reference thereto is made. Comments on the proposals were invited by no later than 18th February 2000.

4.3 Responses were received as follows:-

Norwich North Liberal Democrats (North City Branch) commented that

- They were concerned at the opportunity for fraud on all postal ballot voting. In houses in multiple occupation and in some small private mansion blocks there was only a common letterbox and there was nothing to stop someone sweeping up other people's ballot papers.
- Unlike normal postal votes, many postal votes would be sent to people who had no wish to receive them. The postal papers could be thrown out only for someone else to send them in.
- They were concerned at the proposal not to use Royal Mail.
- Wards selected should be a mix of above average as well as below average turnout.
- No ward should be chosen which could be considered as marginal. In particular, the likely size of the majority could be less than the number of complaints from voters claiming they did not receive their postal ballot papers.

Norfolk Natural Law Party commented that

- There was a great deal of work for little return on the early voting scheme and that many of the people voting in advance could vote just as easily on the actual day. With the availability of postal and proxy voting they queried why

the pilot had been suggested and whether the extra cost could be justified.

- They supported the concept of mobile polling stations and felt that elderly people would feel more involved if able to vote in the usual way.

Norwich South Conservative Association commented that

- They supported in principle any efforts to improve turnout at local elections.
- They were concerned that the final say on the schemes and, in particular, the wards to be used would rest solely with the Labour and the Liberal Democrat parties.
- Their main objection to the proposal for all ward postal votes was in the relaxation of the declaration of identity, which at the moment prevented illegal voting. They believed that the proposals as they stood were dangerously insecure and open to widespread and easily achieved abuse. There was no mechanism for preventing or exposing the illegal use of votes.
- Every ward in the City contained households with multiple occupancy and most have residential homes of one form or another. Some wards had a particularly large number of such households and the University ward contained communal university residences. Posting ballot papers to such households was extremely insecure. In particular:-
 - Most ballot papers, even if hand delivered, will fall into the lobby of these households and will not be delivered directly to the voter. Anyone interested in the illegal use of some else's vote will have ample opportunity to obtain ballot papers at this point.
 - In communal residences such as those at the University of East Anglia there is no security of posting at all and it is possible to literally go around pigeonholes collecting ballot papers for illegal use.
 - If ballots are delivered to residential homes it is not possible to guarantee that they will find their way to the voter. They could easily be misappropriated and used illegally.
 - In some cases the head of household may take the ballot forms and vote in place of other members of the household.
- They stated that each of these cases constitutes the theft of a vote and a denial of the right of every individual to vote freely and anonymously for the candidates of their choice. These problems will be considerable because, even with the proposed publicity, many people will not be expecting a ballot through the post and so will not miss it if it doesn't arrive. Those who are away from home, students in particular, are unlikely to be any the wiser. Further, people are very unlikely to complain about the loss of vote, firstly because they haven't been expecting a ballot paper but also because there is a general disinterest in voting in the first place.
- They were extremely concerned about the proposals to use, "one stop shops", as early voting stations. These offices were located principally in areas of Council owned housing. Whilst it was not true to say that all people in these

areas would vote for a particular party, it would be false to conclude that this did not represent a clear political bias.

- Their view was that local elections were largely determined by differential turnout and that the Labour Party vote had recently suffered from, “stay at home voters”. To allow them an opportunity to maintain their vote as a result of structural changes in the election system, rather than as a consequence of a fairly fought campaign would be grossly undemocratic.
- They recognised that many people would benefit from the proposal for mobile voting stations and were happy to support it provided that it could be guaranteed that vulnerable voters would not be influenced by the staff at the stations or by anyone else. Also, there must be guarantees that the secrecy of the ballot was not compromised.

4.4 Following receipt of these representations the Returning Officer met representatives of the parties to discuss their concerns. At that meeting the Returning Officer stated that he would advise the parties of the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Minority Group in consultation with himself in respect of the wards to be selected for the all postal ballot pilots and in terms of the early voting stations for use on Thursday 27th April.

- In terms of the all postal ballots, they were minded to name Bowthorpe and Catton Grove wards on the basis of both having extremely low turnouts at the last elections and neither falling into the categories of marginal or politically sensitive.
- The Returning Officer had decided not to use “one stop shops” as early voting stations and to move to a position of one station for each ward. A list of the stations to be used was provided for the parties including “mixed” stations for Heigham, Henderson, Eaton and Town Close wards to overcome some of the geographical difficulties which applied to those wards

4.5 Following the Representation of the People Act 2000 receiving Royal Assent, the Returning Officer wrote to all parties on 20 March 2000, advising of the details of the three schemes subject to the following further details or modifications as a result of the consultation process and the draft secondary legislation which was shortly expected from the Home Office.

- Total Postal Ballot –Ballot papers would be hand delivered by canvass staff on Wednesday and Thursday, 26th and 27th April. Consideration was being given to opening reception centres for voters to hand in their ballot papers on polling day. Special arrangements would be made for students at the UEA registered at the University Village so that their papers are delivered on a personal basis to their rooms. Student’s late back from the Easter vacation would be able to hand in their ballot Papers to the reception centre at the West Earlham Community Centre.
- Early Polling Stations – full details of the stations to be used for the early voting on Thursday 27th April were supplied together with the arrangements for the early voting on Saturday 29th April at City Hall.

- Mobile Polling Stations – these were being established subject to demand and mobile polling was to be conducted on Wednesday 3rd May and Thursday 4th May. Targeting appropriate institutions and categories of electors was being done through a poster and leaflet campaign and by providing a simple application form on the leaflet.

Findings

The Returning Officer undertook comprehensive consultation with all political parties discussing their concerns over various aspects of the pilots. As a result a number of changes were made to the detailed arrangements. The Returning Officer was available throughout the whole of the election process to discuss both general and individual matters.

It was inevitable that concerns should be raised concerning abuse of the pilot for postal voting in two wards. However, it appears that the safeguards built into the postal vote system are currently adequate to protect against widespread fraud. As long as ballot papers are delivered to electors` homes there seems to be little opportunity for systematic abuse. However, good practice and changes could be introduced to reflect the practice in other countries, such as Australia, where postal voting is more widely used.

The Conservative Party commented that it was not possible to guarantee that ballot papers delivered to residential homes will find their way to the voter. Concerns have been raised over a number of years on the potential for “farming” of votes at residential/nursing accommodation. The Norwich pilot for mobile voting provided for such facility to be available at the request of individual electors on certain grounds. The provision of a mobile polling station at residential/nursing and similar accommodation as part of the normal voting process could overcome these concerns but would increase election costs.

All Postal Ballots

- 5.1 All postal ballots were used in two wards, Bowthorpe with 8517 electors and Catton Grove with 5370 electors. These two wards were selected on the basis of both having extremely low turnouts at the last elections and neither falling into the categories of marginal or politically sensitive. The purpose of the pilot scheme was to compare turnout both with previous elections and with similar wards at the same elections.
- 5.2 All voters in these two wards were advised that to vote in the May elections they would no longer need to go to a polling station but would be delivered with a ballot paper which would be delivered on Wednesday 26th April and must be returned by close of poll – 9 pm on 4th May.
- 5.3 The leaflet advised that each elector who is eligible to vote would receive a personally addressed envelope containing a ballot paper, a small ballot paper envelope, a declaration of identity and a postage paid reply envelope. A step-by-step guide on how to vote was also included on the leaflet. Additionally, following comments by one of the political parties, a leaflet explaining how to complete the declaration of identify was also provided to each elector.

- 5.4 Any voter who had appointed a proxy and who was on the indefinite absent voting list was offered the opportunity to receive a postal vote if they had a suitable address within the United Kingdom. In cases where they did not have such an address or required that the proxy exercised the right to vote, the proxy was asked to provide an address to which the postal ballot paper may be sent.
- 5.5 The postal ballot papers were delivered by hand on Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th April by canvassing staff who had a good knowledge of the two wards. Postal votes outside the City were sent by post. Ballot papers were not issued to deceased persons where the Election Section had notification from the registrar or from other sources. Those and any other ballot papers not delivered for any other reasons were recorded as undelivered on the official statement.
- 5.6 Early discussions were held with Royal Mail who arranged through their Collection Manager for special collections from the Bowthorpe and Catton Grove areas and facilitated special sorting arrangements for these postal votes.
- 5.7 Following the delivery of the postal ballot papers and before polling day on 4th May six electors from the two wards contacted the election office to the effect that they had not received their papers. The Returning Officer arranged for those electors to be personally delivered with another set of papers. Each elector was required to complete a declaration certifying that they had not received a ballot paper for the ward for the election. The declaration also provided that the electors undertook to return the original documents to the Elections Office if they were subsequently received and they understood that it was an offence to vote more than once at the same election.
- 5.8 On election day posters were displayed at the polling stations normally used in the Bowthorpe and Catton Grove Wards advising electors that ballot papers had been delivered to their addresses and the polling stations were not open and that for votes to be counted, the Returning Officer must receive ballot papers by 9.00 p.m. on that day. Further, arrangements had been made for electors to hand in ballot papers in person at designated receiving centres between 9.00 am and 5.00 p.m.

Findings

The ability to hand deliver postal ballot papers rather than use the services of Royal Mail allowed better control of the operation. Any undelivered ballot papers were recorded and accounted for.

There were a few instances of electors` not receiving their postal ballot papers and this is something that the Returning Officer might wish to discuss with those undertaking the delivery. However, the decision of the Returning Officer to issue replacement ballot papers subject to a declaration by the electors is to be commended.

The arrangements for the delivery and return of the postal ballot papers worked well.

Early Voting

- 6.1 The early voting pilot was used to compare turnouts with previous elections.

- 6.2 The pilot scheme application proposed that the early voting polling stations would be located at the seven one stop shops in the city.
- 6.3 Leaflets were distributed to all households in the fourteen other wards advising of the arrangements for early voting. Electors were advised that they would be able to vote early on Thursday 27th April at a polling station near to where they lived. Electors were advised to look carefully at their polling card to find out which polling station they can use in their area.
- 6.4 Electors were also advised that on Saturday 29th April from 9 am to 5 pm they would be able to vote in City Hall regardless of which area they live in the city. The Order confirming the pilot arrangements provided that the time up to which votes could be cast was 5.30 p.m.
- 6.5 The electoral registers used for the advance voting on 27th and 29th April and on election day were printed on high quality paper. It was the intention that the registers be marked in a consistent way so that the day or method of voting could not be easily detected by a person inspecting or taking a copy of the marked register after the election. However The City of Norwich (Pilot Schemes) Order 2000 specified that a different mark be placed on the register of electors and the list of proxies for each day on which polling takes place.
- 6.6 The Order also provided that a different official mark should be used for each of the days on which polling takes place.
- 6.7 To aid eventual sorting at the verification stage, different coloured ballot papers were used for wards falling into the same pair or group.

Findings

The administration for the advance voting worked well and the poll cards advising the electors` of the options for voting was clear and easy to understand. The pilot schemes involved considerable administrative work that was compounded by the Home Office requirements for the use of different official marks and different marks on the register. This was so that it was clear which and how many people have voted on each day. The Returning Officer arranged for "ballot paper" accounts to be completed for each stage of the voting. An election can be challenged by way of election petition and the election court would then be concerned as to how many and when people voted. The procedures put in place by the Returning Officer, together with the marking of the counterfoils of the used ballot papers was sufficient and the Home Office requirement was an unnecessary addition.

Mobile Voting

- 7.1 Mobile polling stations were used to compare turnout with previous elections.
- 7.2 Electors who were unable to get to the polling station because of health or mobility problems could request a mobile polling station to visit them at home. The elector would be able to vote in much the same way as in a normal polling station. Electors were advised that there would be, as usual, be voting screens, a ballot box and ballot papers. The mobile polling teams were to carry out visits on

Wednesday 3rd May and Thursday 4th May. However, the Order only allowed for this to be done on the 2nd and 3rd of May which is when the visits actually took place.

- 7.3 Electors wishing to apply for a visit by a mobile polling station were advised that forms were available from the Elections Office in City Hall and that completed forms must be received by the Elections Office not later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday 25th April.
- 7.4 It was the intention that electors who had changes in their health after the closing date for ordinary applications could still apply for a visit of a mobile station. However, the Order did not permit this to be done.
- 7.5 The mobile teams were equipped with portable screens and ballot boxes to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot was maintained.

Findings

The low take-up of applications for the mobile voting facility was disappointing. However, electors generally become accustomed to voting at the same school or hall or with an absent vote and are reluctant, at times, to change their way of voting for what might be a “one off” occasion. However the arrangements for mobile voting were comprehensive and those electors who used this facility were pleased with the provision.

As the mobile polling stations only visited individual households there was no requirement for the portable voting screens to be used.

Security

- 8.1 The Returning Officer arranged for the sealed ballot boxes used for early voting on Thursday 27th April to be stored in the fireproof strong room on the lower ground floor of City Hall. Any agent present was permitted to add their own seal or make a note of the seal numbers. The same procedure applied at the close of poll for advance voting on Saturday 29th April.
- 8.2 The mobile ballot boxes were stored and secured in the same way.
- 8.3 Any agent present was permitted to add their own seal or make a note of the seal numbers. No agents chose to do so.
- 8.4 There was very little interest from candidates/agents at the opening of the postal votes and advance voting and their verification.

Findings

Although political parties made comments before voting about security and secrecy arrangements there appeared to be an acceptance by them of the arrangements made by the Returning Officer.

The Count

- 9.1 The election counts took place in the St. Andrews Hall, Norwich and commenced

at 9.00 p.m. on Thursday 4th May.

9.2 The Returning Officer arranged that

- (1) the opening of the postal voters` ballot boxes and of the envelopes contained therein in respect of the Bowthorpe and Catton Grove wards would take place at 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday 2nd May 2000;
- (2) the opening of the postal voters` ballot boxes and of the envelopes contained therein for the remaining wards and any late deliveries in respect of the Bowthorpe and Catton Grove wards would take place at 2.15 p.m. on Thursday 4th May;
- (3) the opening of the early voting ballot boxes for the purpose of verification of the ballot paper accounts would take place immediately at the conclusion of the opening of the postal voters` ballot boxes on Tuesday 2nd May and, if necessary, on Thursday, 4th May 2000;
- (4) the opening of the mobile polling station ballot boxes for the purpose of verification of the ballot paper accounts would take place immediately at the conclusion of the opening of the postal voters` ballot boxes on Thursday, 4th May 2000; and
- (5) if necessary, a further opening of the postal voters` ballot boxes and of the envelopes contained therein would take place at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 4th May 2000, in the St. Andrews Hall, Norwich.

9.3 Candidates were invited to be represented at all of the above proceedings.

Findings

The opening and verification of the postal voters` ballot boxes in respect of the Bowthorpe and Catton Grove wards was an onerous task. However, the arrangements made by the Returning Officer, particularly for the main opening of such boxes, worked extremely well. This led to a situation whereby the results in the Catton Grove and Bowthorpe wards were declared by 9.20 p.m. and 9.45 p.m. respectively.

The count proceedings at St.Andrews Hall were undertaken in a calm and efficient manner and showed the benefits of the good organisational arrangements of the Returning Officer and his staff.

**Colin Marshall
Assistant Director (Administration & Electoral) Services
and Deputy Returning Officer**

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31 May 2000

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA REPORT

SURVEY OF VOTERS AND NON-VOTERS

Pilot Election Schemes Questionnaire Results

Of the 1200 questionnaires sent out, there was a return rate of 348 - 61.6% of whom voted in the local election this year as opposed to 38.4% who didn't. These percentages are obviously quite different from the percentages of the whole electorate who voted this year, and this will have to be borne in mind when studying the results. It is also interesting to note the divergence between the numbers of people who claim that they usually vote in local elections compared to the number who actually did this year - people tend to see themselves as voters even if in reality they do not very often vote.

Did subject vote in local elections this year?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	212.00	60.9%	61.6%	61.6%
	no	132.00	37.9%	38.4%	100%
	Total	344.00	98.9%	100%	
Missing	System	4.00	1.1%		
Total		348.00	100%		

Does subject usually vote in local elections?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	282.00	81.0%	82.7%	82.7%
	no	59.00	17.0%	17.3%	100%
	Total	341.00	98.0%	100%	
Missing	System	7.00	2.0%		
Total		348.00	100%		

Gender - there was not any relation between gender and voting patterns - participation rates for males and females were very close, at 60% and 62.4% respectively (appendix p.1).

Age - as might have been expected, younger people (especially those aged between 18-27) were much less likely to vote, or even see themselves as voters, than their older counterparts. As can be seen from the two tables below, there is an almost direct relation between age and participation in local politics (at least where voting is concerned). Those under the age of 38 made up 42.5% of those who did not vote, and 74.3% of 18-27-year-olds did not vote in the local election this year (as compared to 11.8% of those aged 78+). It is thus younger voters who most need to be targeted in order to increase electoral participation, and the reasons these young people gave for not voting will be of great importance in attempting to do this.

Recorded age * Does subject usually vote in local elections? Crosstabulation
Count

		Does subject usually vote in local elections?		Total
		yes	no	
Recorded age	Age 18-27	14	19	33
	Age 28-37	32	16	48
	Age 38-47	43	10	53
	Age 48-57	44	6	50
	Age 58-67	42	5	47
	Age 68-77	61	1	62
	Age 78-87	30		30
	Age 88-97	4		4
Total		270	57	327

Recorded age * Did subject vote in local elections this year? Crosstabulation
Count

		Did subject vote in local elections this year?		Total
		yes	no	
Recorded age	Age 18-27	9	26	35
	Age 28-37	20	28	48
	Age 38-47	30	23	53
	Age 48-57	28	22	50
	Age 58-67	30	17	47
	Age 68-77	55	7	62
	Age 78-87	27	3	30
	Age 88-97	3	1	4
Total		202	127	329

SECTION B:

By what means did subject vote?

Polling station on Thursday 4th May	68.1%
Polling station on Thursday 27th April	11.1%
City Hall on Saturday 29th April	1.9%
Mobile polling station	0.9%
By post	13.0%
By proxy	0.5%
(Missing values)	4.5%

Voting at a polling station on Thursday 4th May, the 'traditional' day to vote, was by far the most popular means of voting, perhaps pointing to the limited effectiveness of introducing the new methods. However, a not-insignificant 11.1% used the facility of being able to vote a week early at a polling station near their home. However, as can be seen from the cross-tabulation of 'means of voting' by 'whether the subject usually votes' (appendix p. 4), all of those who voted a week early are 'usual-voters'.

Figures for voting by post are not insignificant either, although one must remember that most of the postal voters (in fact, 9% of these) were in 'postal only' wards.

Figures for the other voting methods are fairly negligible - it may take a little time (i.e. more than one pilot) for people to think about voting when they're in the city centre on a Saturday, unless, perhaps, it is placed right in front of them. And speculating on the low usage of mobile polling stations or the proxy vote, one reason may be that people saw it as involving too much organisation (many think that going to the polling station takes up too much time). Those who did use these methods, however, did not generally say that voting required more effort (appendix

p.4).

Age (appendix p.2) - No-one under the age of 38 made use of the early voting dates available. Those aged between 68-77 made by far the most use of these, an age group that is much more likely to vote than the younger electorate. This perhaps suggests the limited use of these provisions in increasing voter turnout - they are more likely to simply make voting more convenient for those who would vote anyway.

Electoral Ward (appendix p.3) - No significance could be drawn from looking at electoral ward by voting method, but I think that it is important to note one thing that it did show - that no survey is 100% reliable. The fact that 5 people from the 'postal only' wards claim to have voted at a polling station, I think, attests to this.

Did voting require a lot of effort?

Yes	5.6%
No	92.1%
(Missing values)	2.3%

Although, percentage-wise, certain methods of voting seem to require more effort than others, the numbers involved are far too small to be reliable (appendix p.4). This is partly because the vast majority of respondents said that voting did not require a lot of effort, and this is true of all of the methods of voting.

SECTION C:

Reasons given (in order of preference) for not voting in the local election this year:

- I did not have time / was too busy - 36.0%
- I did not receive enough information on the candidates standing for election - 30.1%
- None of the candidates' policies appealed to me - 25.0%
- I am not interested in politics - 22.8%
- There was not enough choice in policies being offered - 20.6%
- I do not feel part of the local community - 19.9%
- I was not aware of the new methods of voting available - 16.9%
- I was away and did not arrange a Postal or Proxy vote - 16.2%
- It was a safe seat in my ward - 13.2%
- I did not know when the election was held - 11.0%
- One vote does not make any difference - 8.8%
- I did not know where to vote - 8.8%
- Local politics are not important - 6.6%
- I belong to a 'postal-only' ward and would prefer to vote in person - 2.9%
- The polling station was too far away from where I live/work - 2.2%

[The percentages refer only to those people who did not vote - unlike those in the original tables in the Appendix, p. 5-9]

The most popular reasons for not voting range from lifestyle issues that lead people to be too busy to vote, to a lack of information, dissatisfaction with the current political situation (no choice), and a lack of interest in politics. It is interesting to note that practical reasons relating to the current way people have to cast their vote (not knowing when/where to vote; polling station being too far away) are given much less importance as factors contributing to people's non-participation, although 16.9% gave 'not being aware of the new methods of voting available' as a reason.

Gender (appendix p.10-13) - There were not any huge divergences according to gender - the only significant difference concerned 'I did not vote because none of the candidates' policies appealed to me', with 43% of males agreeing to 20% of females (approx.). None of the other divergences were much more than 1 0%, and most were less than this.

Age (appendix p.13-20) - Age is more interesting, in that younger people under the age of 38 were

much more likely to give 'not interested in politics' as a reason for not voting than older voters (although the majority of young people still disagreed with this statement) - this group accounted for just under half of those who agreed. The most popular reason for not voting, however, for the 18-27 age group, was 'not feeling part of the community'. This may be because young people generally tend to be more mobile - indeed, many stated this in the comments (e.g. 'moving away soon', 'just moved here'). Being too busy was the most popular reason for those aged between 28-67. (It is difficult to generalise about the 68+ as the numbers are very small).

Depending on whether subject usually votes (appendix p.21-24) - It is interesting to look at how the answers to this section differ as to whether the subject usually votes or not. Obviously, those who do not usually vote were much more likely than those who do to state 'not interested in politics' as a factor contributing to not voting this year, and lifestyle issues were generally more important in preventing the participation of those who usually do vote. There were, however, also similarities, as can be seen in the following table:

Most important reasons for not voting, in order of 'preference':

Usual Voters:	'Not Usual' Voters:
I did not have time/was too busy	I did not receive enough information on the candidates standing for election
I did not receive enough information on the candidates standing for election	I am not interested in politics
I was away and did not arrange a postal or proxy vote	I did not have time/was too busy
There was not enough choice in policies being offered	None of the candidates' policies appealed to me

Although there are the differences that would be expected between those who do and those who do not usually vote, there are also certain fundamental issues that contribute to the non-participation of both groups - those being, firstly, a general lack of information and secondly, a lack of satisfaction with what is being offered by candidates/parties. Given that not having enough time and not receiving enough information are popular reasons for the non-participation of both groups, and also that the two reasons could be seen as contradictory, it may be worth thinking about how information can be transmitted through a user-friendly and exciting channel.

SECTION D:

The results of the following table have been calculated using two methods. The first method involved simply counting the number of people who chose a particular option (first column) - this method also includes the most people, as many who filled in Section D of the questionnaire did not rate their choices. The second column takes account of the ratings that were given to each choice (they were allowed to pick 3), at least for those who did rate them - a first choice was given 3 points, a second 2, and a third 1. The third column is calculated by simply adding the first two columns together. Although this does bias the results towards the subjects who rated their choices, I believe that including the ratings is necessary to gain a greater understanding of the importance given to each choice.

Results of options chosen to improve voter turnout, in order of preference:

	No. of people who chose this option	Taking account of weighting (ratings given)	Total
More information on candidates and their policies	166	289	455
More information about the Council	138	186	324
Polling in supermarkets/shopping centres/art galleries etc.	108	163	271
More coverage of local elections and related issues in the local media	110	157	267
Voting by phone/Internet/Digital TV	95	164	259
Increase in the power of local government	69	130	199
Increasing postal ballots	62	104	166
Greater choice of policies on offer	62	81	143
Polling stations open on more days for longer hours	54	77	131
More door-to-door canvassing by political parties	53	76	129
Increase in mobile polling stations	54	37	91

The above table points to the following conclusions:

- Receiving more information, about candidates, policies and the Council, is the most important factor that people believe would encourage participation in local elections.
- New methods of voting (by phone, in supermarkets etc.) are also a high priority, perhaps reflecting the lifestyle considerations of those who are too busy to get to a polling station - in fact, opening polling stations for longer is given fairly low priority.
- The 'old' methods of recruiting voters, like door-to-door canvassing or mobile polling stations, are given lowest priority - perhaps because they have been tried already and have not proved effective.

Gender (appendix p.31-34) - Divergences were not great according to gender. The biggest differences were on voting methods - 34% of men chose voting by phone/Internet/digital TV compared to 25% of women, while 38% of women chose voting in supermarkets/shopping centres/art galleries etc. compared to 28% of men. This probably reflects a difference in lifestyle more than anything else, and on the whole the figures for the sexes were pretty similar.

Age (appendix p.34-38) - As might have been expected, voting by phone/Internet/digital TV is much more important for younger voters than older - and considering that it is younger people who tend not to vote, this method may well be worth trying. And although 'more media coverage' had fluctuating importance according to age, it was by far the most popular with the 18-27 age group. Increasing door-to-door canvassing, although not incredibly popular with any age group, was significantly less popular with those aged 18-27. More information about the Council was more important for older voters and, as might be expected, increasing mobile polling stations was significantly more important for those aged 68+. This information, however, does not tell us what the most popular choices were for each age group:

More information on candidates and their policies - ages 18-48 and 78-88

More information about the Council - ages 58-78

Polling stations in supermarkets/shopping centres/art galleries etc. - ages 48-58

NB: It is not possible to generalise about ages 87-98 as the numbers are too small. It is also important to bear in mind when looking at overall preferences that certain age groups are more represented than others (although this may be reflective of the electorate as a whole).

Electoral Ward (appendix p.39-49) - It may not be significant to study this section according to electoral ward, and the numbers are also fairly small. What did strike me as significant, however, was that 'increasing postal ballots' was an option that was most popular among residents of Catton Grove, a 'postal-only' ward. This was not the case, though, for Bowthorpe, the other postal ward.

FURTHER COMMENTS

On the comments that respondents added themselves:

- There was only one comment that tended to recur, and that was a general distrust of politicians as a reason for not voting. Many said that more honesty, truthfulness, and the keeping of promises on the part of politicians, would encourage people to vote.
- Three respondents said that voting should be made compulsory.
- Some worried that options like voting on the Internet, by phone, and by post, could be open to vote rigging.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Page 51 of the appendix shows the different participation rates for different electoral wards. It would be interesting to research the reasons behind these different levels, taking account of factors like affluence, and perhaps the different levels of targeting by political parties that each ward has received. Obviously, the research would have to be on a far greater scale than the scale of this project - one of the problems I had when looking at electoral wards was that the numbers were so small.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from this research that increasing the information that voters receive (on candidates, policy, the Council), perhaps through a more vibrant form of communication like debates in/on the local media, is likely to be one of the most effective routes to increase participation in local elections, especially among the young. The other promising avenue to take is the widening of the methods of voting available to include the use of technology that most people use in their everyday lives (at least the phone) - this, again, is particularly popular among the younger voters, the very people who need to be targeted most. The use of postal ballots this year have had some success along these lines, but it seems clear that increasing the provisions already available (e.g. extending polling station opening times) have limited popularity and are not sufficiently addressing the reasons behind low participation.

APPENDIX 4

FINANCIAL EVALUATION

The additional cost of running the pilots is set out in the following table. It should be noted, however, that, it is not possible to accurately calculate all costs as some are/will be absorbed in the costs of the normal elections.

Item	Cost
Issue and receipt of postal votes (estimated staffing costs)	£4100
Early voting premises (including delivery of equipment)	£3495
Early voting staffing	£4270
Delivery of publicity leaflet	£1680
Mobile voting (equipment and staffing)	£510
Transport and travelling costs	£180
Equipment	£405
Printing and stationery	£8105
Postages	£1725
Advertising	£1310
Evaluation	£1400
Miscellaneous	£1050
Sub-total	£28230
Less savings on staffing and premises cost (Bowthorpe/Catton Grove)	£3260
Total	£24970

The major conclusion to be drawn is that the considerable costs reported above are far in excess of the estimated additional costs shown in the application to conduct the pilots (by some 60%) and represent nearly 30% of the costs for conducting the City Council elections in the "traditional" way. Given the marginal increase in overall turnout (0.31%), it could be argued that expenditure of this magnitude cannot be justified.