

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny

**Date:** 8 September 2008

**Subject:** Consultation - Election Day - weekend voting consultation

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive

**Contact officer:** Diane Taylor 01942 827135

---

**Purpose / summary:** To summarise the results of a consultation with elected members and elections administrators on moving elections to weekend.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** None

**Recommendation / decision:** That the consultation document can be submitted to the Ministry of Justice for consideration

The decision will be made as a result of this report and will be published within 48 hours

**Risks / Implications:** Elections day could be moved to weekend from Thursdays

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Policy: None

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? No. A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Wards affected: All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

No

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

Not at the moment, it is at consultation stage.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

Not at the moment, it is at consultation stage.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution? **Yes / \***

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget? **/ No \***

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **/ No \***

\* delete which applicable

**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>x</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	<b>X</b>
Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	

	<b>x</b>
Discussion	
Decision	
Information	

**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer Sue Johnson

Date 27 August 2008



## The Governance of Britain

### Election Day – weekend voting consultation [CP 13/08]

#### List of questions for response

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper. Please email your completed form to:

[weekendvotingconsultation@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:weekendvotingconsultation@justice.gsi.gov.uk) or fax to: **020 7210 2659**. Thank you!

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.

Comments: Administrators felt that if it had to be moved it should be to Saturday to undertake voting and to carry out the count on Sunday.

Of the responses received from elected members they felt that convenience is only a small part of whether or not the public vote. One member felt that weekend voting would in fact diminish returns as voters would have other priorities. It was also put forward that voters would have other opportunities such as postal voting to ensure their vote is registered, members therefore felt it unnecessary to move polling day.

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

Comments: Administrators felt that electoral administrators, council staff, religious groups, elected members, providers of premises, voters, schools, pupils, parents within schools normally used, and businesses would be affected.

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

Comments: Questions 3 and 4 have been answered together.

Administrators felt that this was a positive approach but security, elected members trust, electors trust and effective systems would need to be in place.

Elected members felt that greater access would be required to other means of voting and access to premises available at weekends.

However, members do point out that all electors do not have access to the internet or are not IT literate, and would need to be reassured that systems were secure and trustworthy. Most members consider postal voting as an additional method but

agree that other options should be made available backed up by the appropriate systems and security.

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.

Comments:

The 2004 elections were all postal votes. Administrators felt that it was hard work for the electoral administrators but it did work. We would ask why this hasn't been considered in the separate consultation on moving the date of English Local Government Elections?

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

Comments: Administrators felt that the benefits are easier access for electors, and could be cost effective. Drawbacks could mean inequalities for some people, language difficulties, age, lacking in technical experience, cost for systems and technology, security and lack of trust.

6. Should the government pilot weekend voting before introducing it across the UK?

Comments: Administrators views were that this should definitely be the approach taken!

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?

Comments:

Administrators felt that they would have to pay staff more to work at weekends and many would be unwilling to give up their weekends. Staff receive payment and a day out of work at the moment. We also have difficulties in booking venues currently. Unsure whether weekend need would make obtaining venues easier or not. School premises would be easier to negotiate on weekends but other premises might be in use.

Administrators also feel the administration and count would be easier, especially if held on separate days.

Members responding, felt that cost would be the main issue if moving elections to weekend. They gave the example of the need to open up schools at weekend.

Administrators agreed that costs would increase for premises as well as payments to staff. They also felt there might be some security and safety issues operating polling

premises at weekends.

Members pointed out some religious concerns with holding elections on Saturday or Sunday, however they did point out that postal votes and other means are available to overcome religious issues.

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.

Comments:

Administrators do not understand why the second weekend in May. Why can it not be the first weekend in May? We feel the closer to the end of the municipal year i.e. March would be better, but adverse weather could affect turnout.

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

Comments: Administrators feel that access, equality issues, fairness, security, candidate quality/lack of information. Electors knowledge about; members, work of local authority, why they are voting and what for, what it will mean if they do or don't vote. Apathy and lack of interest in politics.

General Comments, from elected members responding:

In general those responding felt that there would be no real impact on the numbers voting if weekend voting was to be introduced.

Some members did feel that making voting compulsory would help and others felt that ensuring more community involvement, improving availability and methods of voting and engaging voters more in the process would help

## About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself.

<b>Full name</b>	Diane Taylor
<b>Job title</b> or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	Principal Policy & Performance Improvement Officer

<b>Date</b>	27 August 2008
<b>Company name/organisation</b> (if applicable):	Wigan Council
<b>Address</b>	Town Hall
	Library Street, Wigan
<b>Postcode</b>	WN1 1YN
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	as 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.  
Elections Administrators at Wigan Council and elected members of Wigan Council.

---