

Subject:	Items referred from the Council meeting held on the 19 December 2019		
	Notice of Motion – Proportional Representation and Voter Trials		
Date of Meeting:	23 January 2020		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
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Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To receive the following Notice of Motion which was debated at and referred from the full Council meeting held on the 19 December 2019.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee responds to the motion either by noting it or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter as requested, which may give consideration to a range of options.

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 To receive the following extract from the minutes of the full council meeting held on the 19 December 2019 setting out the motion and recommendation for the committee to consider as detailed below:

- 3.2 The extract from the full Council meeting is detailed below:

This council therefore, requests that the Policy & Resources Committee, considers calling for a report detailing the implications of Voter ID on residents in the city and that the report explores the impact of the FPTP electoral system on local elections in Brighton and Hove and how this compares to the popular vote.

COUNCIL

4.30pm 19 DECEMBER 2019

HOVE TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBER

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Phillips (Chair), Robins (Deputy Chair), Allcock, Atkinson, Barnett, Bell, Brown, Childs, Clare, Davis, Deane, Druitt, Ebel, Evans, Fishleigh, Fowler, Gibson, Grimshaw, Hamilton, Heley, Hill, Hills, Hugh-Jones, Janio, Knight, Lewry, Littman, Lloyd, Mac Cafferty, Mears, McNair, Miller, Moonan, Nemeth, Nield, O'Quinn, Osborne, Pissaridou, Platts, Powell, Rainey, Shanks, Simson, C Theobald, Wares, West, Wilkinson, Williams and Yates.

PART ONE

60. NOTICES OF MOTION

(4) PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND VOTER TRIALS

- 60.1 The Mayor noted that an updated notice of motion had been circulated with the addendum papers and that Councillor Mac Cafferty would like the revised version to be considered. She therefore sought confirmation that the Council was happy to accept the amended version of the motion for debate.
- 60.2 Councillor Wares requested that the matter be put to the vote as it was felt that the amended version simply added to the original one rather than actually updating it.
- 60.3 The Mayor noted the request and put the proposal to take the revised version of the motion to the vote which was lost by 19 votes to 25.
- 60.4 The Mayor then invited Councillor Mac Cafferty to move the notice of motion as listed in the agenda papers.
- 60.5 Councillor Mac Cafferty formally moved the motion and stated that there was a need to consider reviewing the electoral process and drew attention to the results in the recent General Election which had seen MPs being elected with varying degrees of the overall percentage of the vote. He noted that overall in 2001 the Labour Party had secured 40.7% of the vote and gained 413 seats and yet in 2017 with 40% of the vote they gained 262 seats. He believed the first past the post system needed to be replaced and an alternative form of proportional representation such as the single transferable vote (stv) brought in and if that was not going to be at a national level it should be at a local level.
- 60.6 Councillor Clare formally seconded the motion and stated that the current system created unwinnable seats which tended to be held by men. This actively prevented a greater diversity of elected Members and needed to be addressed to enable a better reflection of the community. She also noted the Government's intention for Vote ID to

be brought in and questioned its effectiveness given that during the recent trials significant numbers of people had been turned away and then not returned to vote.

- 60.7 Councillor Platts stated that the Labour Group were supportive of the original motion but had not been comfortable with the amended version. She acknowledged that a review of the electoral system was required and that it would be for the national parties to take forward. In regard to the introduction of Voter ID, she believed that further consideration was required before it was rolled out and more information provided to ensure it would be effective.
- 60.8 Councillor McNair noted that a number of European countries used a form of proportional representation (PR) but questioned whether that meant it was a good system. He noted it tended to result in minority or coalition governments which generated more uncertainty and suggested that without PR it was very unlikely that the Green Party would gain more MPs or form a government. With the First Past the Post system a candidate had to secure the support of their electorate and tended to give a result with a party in power and he felt that was a better option to have.
- 60.9 The Mayor congratulated Councillor McNair on his maiden speech on behalf of the Council.
- 60.10 Councillor Janio stated that he believed the First Past the Post system was the most robust and appropriate system to have. He questioned the ability for a system of PR to provide an Administration with overall control and noted that voter fraud was already an issue and as such Voter ID was important and needed to be introduced. He could not support the motion.
- 60.11 Councillor Hill stated that she favoured a move to PR as it would reflect the percentage of vote that each party was able to achieve and was therefore more democratic. She believed that people would be more receptive to coalition government and that it did work elsewhere.
- 60.12 Councillor Bell stated that it was an interesting debate, and would no doubt continue but he believed in the First Past the Post system and therefore could not support the motion. He also supported the introduction of Voter ID and questioned the opposition to it given the intention to safeguard the electoral process.
- 60.13 Councillor Littman stated that there was a clear need to review the electoral system and referred to the Danish model where there was a Parliament where people across political boundaries actually talked to each other. He hoped that more democratic system would be brought in both at a national and local level and urged councillors to support the motion.
- 60.14 Councillor Mac Cafferty noted the comments and stated that in respect of Voter ID further thought needed to be given to how those who did not have formal ID would not be disenfranchised. There were some 11 million people in the UK without a passport for example. He hoped that if people became aware of the possibilities of PR then there would be more support for it.
- 60.15 The Mayor noted that motion had been moved and put the following motion to the vote:

The council notes:

- (1) Recent legislation published by the Welsh Government, paving the way for Votes at 16 and Single Transferable Vote (STV) in local elections and notes further that Wales follows the voting method for elections in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the London Assembly all now use proportional systems;

- (2) England remains the only country in the UK where local elections are undertaken using the First Past the Post (FPTP) voting system, and, that England is the only country in Europe to use such a system.
- (3) The damaging Voter ID trials undertaken earlier this year in the local elections, and plans announced in the Queen's speech to introduce a Photographic ID requirement. Of 44.6M votes in 2017, electoral fraud resulted in 1 conviction or 0.000063%

This council therefore, requests that the Policy & Resources Committee, considers calling for a report detailing the implications of Voter ID on residents in the city and that the report explores the impact of the FPTP electoral system on local elections in Brighton and Hove and how this compares to the popular vote.

60.16 The Mayor confirmed that the motion had been carried.