

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday 14 September 2021 at 7.30 pm
Council Chamber - Civic Centre

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions
2. Declarations of Interest

To receive Councillors' declarations of interest (if any) in relation to any matters on the agenda.
3. Minutes (Pages 3 - 5)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021.
4. Matters arising
5. Written questions from members of the public

To receive any questions from members of the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
6. Written questions from Councillors

To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.
7. Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Scrutiny Committee

To consider responses (if any) of the Cabinet to reports and recommendations from the Committee.
8. Pre-Scrutiny of Community Safety Strategy
9. Review of Turnout in Local Elections - Initial Report (Pages 6 - 36)
10. Paddling Pools
11. Refuse Collection
12. Work Plan (Pages 37 - 38)

To review the Committee's work plan for the current year.
13. References from Other Committees

14. Matters of Urgent Business

Such other business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be received as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances to be specified in the minutes.

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

13 July 2021

7.30 - 8.30 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Shona Johnson
Councillor Nicky Purse
Councillor Gareth Williams

Also Present

Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Andrew Johnson

Officers

Simon Hill, Head of Governance
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eugenie Harvey.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

5. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

6. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

7. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED that the following response be noted.

- a) Response of the Cabinet to accept the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee from the Review of the Delivery of the Council House Building Programme

8. **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2021/22**

- a) Discussion with Leader

The Chair invited the Leader to outline his priorities for the coming year and to highlight areas where the Leader felt that the Scrutiny Committee could add value to the Cabinet's work.

The Leader said he would welcome input on the following areas:

- Carbon Management Plan
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- Transport Strategy
- Town Centre Regeneration
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Community Safety Strategy
- Community Infrastructure Levy

The Chair thanked the Leader and said the Committee would consider his suggestions and would look at areas it could have pre-scrutiny of. This would include the Community Safety Strategy as set out in the draft work plan.

- b) Agreement of Work Plan

The Committee considered a report setting out a proposed work plan for 2020/21.

RESOLVED that the work plan attached as Appendix A to the report be approved.

9. **HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULTS WITH A MODERATE/SEVERE LEARNING DISABILITY**

The Committee considered a report on a review of housing and accommodation requirements for adults with moderate and severe learning disabilities.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommended to Cabinet that the recommendations in the consultant's report (attached as Appendix A to the report) be adopted.

10. **CALL IN SUB COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

The Committee received a report setting out a proposed process for modifying or withdrawing call ins.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Full Council that the procedure for modifying or withdrawing a call in (attached as Appendix A to the report) be adopted and included in the Constitution.

11. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2020/21**

The Committee received an annual report on the work of the Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that it be recommended to Full Council that it notes the report.

12. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

13. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

TITLE: TURNOUT IN LOCAL ELECTIONS – INITIAL REPORT

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE
(01279) 446099

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: ALISON HODGSON, ELECTORAL SERVICES
MANAGER (01279) 446038

ADAM REES, SENIOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORT
OFFICER (01279) 446057

RECOMMENDED that the Committee:

- A** Notes the information within the report as background and future government proposals.
- B** Approves the questions (attached as Appendix D to the report) for consultation.

BACKGROUND

1. The review submission form (attached as Appendix A to the report) requests that a review is carried out to understand why residents feel disconnected from local politics and why turnout in local elections is lower than for national elections. The review should include a consultation with the public.
2. The Council's Electoral Services has two distinct areas of activity. Firstly, Registration and maintenance of the electoral register. Work on electoral registration is undertaken all year round and currently is required to undertake the annual canvass, which begins in June focusses on ensuring that all eligible residents are registered to vote. This is the statutory responsibility of the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). Secondly, in three years out of four (called election by thirds), the authority (and when casual vacancies arise) holds District Elections. The planning for scheduled elections normally starts at least six to eight months in advance, including ensuring the availability of polling stations and staff. This is the statutory responsibility of the Returning Officer appointed by the Council (RO).
3. In addition, the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places once every five years. The most recent in Harlow being held in 2019. The Government have also begun a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) for which the initial consultation period has just finished. The LGBCE is

also responsible for undertaking periodic reviews of warding arrangements (Electoral Review) which has the ability to recommend changes to Ward Boundaries, numbers of Councillors and Elections frequency.

Statistical History

4. Turnout in elections, and particularly local elections, has decreased over the years in Harlow. The same picture is seen nationally. At the local elections in May 2021 the voter turnouts in Harlow were as follows:

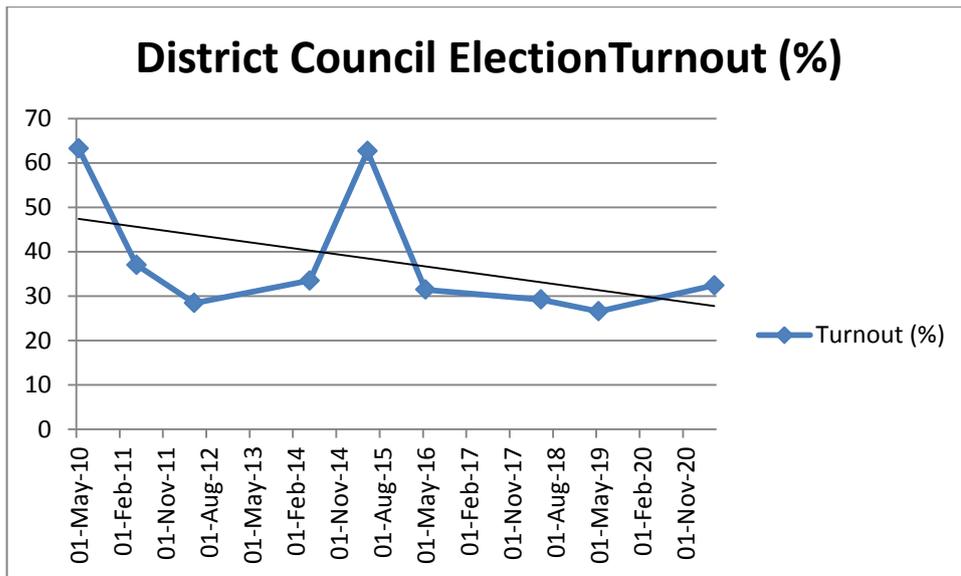
- a) District – 32.42 percent
- b) County – 32.41 percent
- c) PFCC – 32.35 percent

The combination of polls in 2021 did not push up voter turnout.

5. Below is a table which shows the turnout at district and county elections (excluding by-elections) over the past 10 years.

Election Date	Election	Turnout (%)	Combined
6 May 2010	District	63.26	Yes – with Parliamentary
5 May 2011	District	37.03	Yes – with AV Referendum
3 May 2012	District	28.43	No
2 May 2013	County	25.95	No
22 May 2014	District	33.48	Yes – with European
7 May 2015	District	62.65	Yes – with Parliamentary
5 May 2016	District	31.45	Yes – with PFCC
4 May 2017	County	28.59	No
3 May 2018	District	29.22	No
2 May 2019	District	26.55	No
6 May 2021	District	32.42	Yes – with County and PFCC
6 May 2021	County	32.41	Yes – with District and PFCC

6. The below line chart shows a downward trend of district council election turnout, but it should be noted that this is exaggerated by there not being a recent combined District and Parliamentary election. At District level this is particularly apparent when the elections are not combined with another type of election.



7. There has also been a steady decline nationally in turnout at General Elections, although those aged 55 and up have had a flat turnout rate. Turnout for those aged 54 and under has declined and this decline is most significant amongst the 18-24 age group.
8. In terms of comparable national statistics on District Council elections, the most recently published report by the Electoral Commission (2018) on turnout suggests an average turnout of 35.2 % (down from 37.4% in 2014) . Of this 35.2% only 34.9% (12.3% of all electorate), actually attended the polling station, the remainder being postal voters.
9. In 1964, the turnout was comparable across all age groups, but there is now a significant difference in turnout by age. There is no similar breakdown by age of voting at local elections, but it is a reasonable assumption that turnout increases by age at local elections as well.
10. According to 2011 census data, Harlow has a slightly lower percentage of 16-24 year olds than the national average 10.84 – 11.86. It also has a higher percentage of 25-59 year olds 48.48 – 46.92, and a lower percentage of 60-74 year olds 12.27 – 14.57. For those aged 75 and over, the numbers are comparable.

Registration Activity

11. People are legally required to register to vote and can do so from the age of 16 in England. The vast majority of those who are eligible to register in Harlow have done so with 94.3 percent registering in the 2020 canvass. Most of those who have not registered live in temporary accommodation. There is also natural churn on the electoral register as people move properties over the course of the year.
12. In 2014, new legislation changed the registration system from a household based system to Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Its aim was to give each

individual control over their own registration and a new online registration service was created to make registering easier. To ensure the security of this service it also sought additional information, such as their National Insurance number to verify a person's identity. This was a significant change and the registration rate did drop. However, as people got used to the system the registration rate has recovered.

13. The canvassing system was also been streamlined in 2020. In previous years a form was sent to every household asking them to confirm whether there were any changes. Where names are added, under IER, residents are then sent an individual form to complete (which they can also do online). A response was needed from all households.
14. Now household information is data matched against Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) data and local records and where all information matches, households are sent a notification letter which only requires action if there are changes. Households which do not completely match are sent a canvass form which is a legal requirement to respond to. This can be done by returning the form or going online. In 2020 and this year we have achieved a match rate of approximately 80 percent of households which means that only 20 percent of household will receive a canvass form.
15. Where households do not respond, the Council is required to send at least two reminders and one of the reminders must be a physical visit to each property. The Council employs electoral canvassers for this purpose. The new canvassing requirements should reduce the number of properties that need to be visited which means a greater focus can be placed on registering new voters.
16. The transition to IER has enabled voters to register online. There is no longer any need to contact electoral registration teams directly when registering. The Council has also used technology to improve the canvassing process. Households can respond online when they receive household forms.
17. For the first time in 2021, using a combination of savings and Government Grant, the Council has been able to fund the purchase of new canvassing technology for a two year evaluation pilot. Canvass Staff will now be using computer tablets to undertake doorstep registration which should further speed up canvassing. An evaluation of the success of this pilot will be undertaken in the latter part of 2022, one of the success measures would be increased registration.
18. The Council's Communications Team use social media to highlight awareness of the registration process throughout the period of the canvass and in the run up to pre-election registration deadlines. This includes information on the process of registering to vote, as well as applying for postal or proxy votes and the nominations process. This is done using Electoral Commission nationally provided material which is in line with yearly TV and radio campaigns placed by the Commission.

19. Council staff have previously engaged with younger people to encourage registration but this has latterly been curtailed due to the pandemic.

Performance Standards

20. The electoral commission has set ERO's a number of performance standards against which registration activities are measured. We are directed towards the following outcomes:
 - a) Electoral registers are as accurate and complete as possible, ensuring that everyone who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so;
 - b) Absent voting is accessible, ensuring that everyone who is eligible and wants an absent vote is included on the relevant absent vote list; and
 - c) Stakeholders and electors have confidence in the secure management of the electoral registers.

Elections

21. As part of its polling station reviews, the Council looks at a variety of criteria to determine the suitability of polling stations. Access, both in terms of parking, and disabled access is a key consideration when determining whether somewhere is suitable to be a polling station. This is set out in Electoral Commission guidance which reinforces the general equalities duties placed upon the Council. The Commission has also produced a checklist which is attached as Appendix B to the report. An interim review is to be undertaken this year as polling station locations were altered in May 2021 following ministerial requests not to use schools as polling places.
22. The Council already works actively to engage with electors, particularly those who are known to be less likely to register and to vote including young people and ethnic minority groups. A copy of the Public Awareness Strategy is attached as Appendix C to the report.
23. Councillors will be aware that the pre-election period (the period between the publication of the notice of election and the election day itself) places limits on what the Council can and can't do. As a general rule the Council can't take any action which would be seen as promoting or supporting a particular political group. However, the Council can promote voting in general, and it does this through the Public Awareness Strategy, and primarily using Electoral Commission national campaign materials.

Voter ID

24. On 5 July 2021, the UK Parliament introduced new legislation, the Elections Bill, which is hoped will strengthen the integrity of UK elections and protect democracy. One of the main measures (and challenges) is voter ID where voters will be required to show an approved form of photographic ID to be allowed to vote. It is likely that this will be brought in for the UK Parliamentary

election in May 2024 but could lead to big challenges for the Elections Department especially if the secondary legislation and guidance is not provided in a timely manner.

25. Voter ID has been trialled in various areas of the UK and the Electoral Commission's report on the 2019 pilots found that there were no significant issues with voter ID, it increased voter confidence in the elections process but it is crucial that this does not lead to disenfranchisement.
26. Concerns have been raised that the introduction of voter ID would lower turnout, particularly among more vulnerable groups who are less likely to have traditional forms of photo ID. Therefore any voter who does not have an approved form of identification will be able to apply for a free local voter card from their local authority. Details of how this will work have not yet been released. It is noted that in Northern Ireland voters have been required to bring ID to a polling station since 1985 and photographic ID since 2003 and voter confidence is consistently higher with virtually no allegations of electoral fraud at polling stations. Also, other European countries use voter ID, including France, Germany, Austria as well as Switzerland and Canada.
27. Following the 2019 General Election, the Electoral Commission carried out research on how people felt the election was run. This showed that:
 - a) Seventy-eight percent were satisfied with the process of registering to vote;
 - b) Ninety-three percent of those who voted were satisfied with the process of voting;
 - c) Eighty percent said they knew a lot or fair amount about the election;
 - d) Eighty-one percent found it easy to access information on what the election was for; and
 - e) Eighty-eight percent said it was easy to get information on how to register, and how to cast their vote
28. The majority of concerns surrounded campaign techniques and the belief that information about politics online is not trustworthy. The findings published by the Commission did not highlight any concerns from the public about the inadequacies of polling stations, but there was a significant minority of people who didn't feel they had enough information about the election. It is likely that for local elections this number would increase as there is less press coverage of local elections.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

29. This review will focus on identifying barriers to voting in Harlow, will be non-political and will therefore not determine whether there are particular policies which deter voters.
30. It is recommended that the questions attached as Appendix D to the report be approved. These will be included as part of an online consultation. The Council will also contact different community groups to encourage their members to complete the consultation, along with promotion via social media encouraging people to complete the survey.
31. The outcomes of the consultation will be analysed and an action plan will be developed which addresses areas highlighted by the consultation. This will then be reported to the Committee at its December meeting. Following the adoption of the action plan, a further report will come to the Committee meeting in September 2022 updating the Committee on progress against the action plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

None specific.

Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Property and Deputy to the Chief Executive

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing

Community Wellbeing

As contained in the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing

Governance (Includes HR)

The reports sets out the Council's engagement activities for both registration and elections. The Council is under a governance reporting arrangement with the statutory body, the Electoral Commission and is also bound by restrictions on political publicity contained in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986, as amended by Section 349 Communications Act 2003 and Section 27 of the Local Government Act 1988.

Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance

Appendices

Appendix A – Review Submission Form
Appendix B – Electoral Commission Checklist
Appendix C – Public Awareness Strategy
Appendix D – Questions for Consultation

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions
ERO – Electoral Registration Officer
IER – Individual Electoral Registration
LGBCE – Local Government Boundary Commission for England
RO – Returning Officer

Scrutiny Committee – Review Topic Submission Form

Councillor Name and other Councillors supporting submission	Cllr Chris Vince Cllr Tony Durcan Cllr Tony Edwards
Review Topic	Turnout in local elections
Links to the Council's priorities	<i>Being the community leader</i>
What priority level is this item?	<i>high</i>
Terms of reference (to include the scope of the review)	<i>In the last local elections turnout was below 30%. This is considerably lower than in national elections. The scope for this is to find out why it is lower. Do residents feel disconnected from local politics or do they not understand the powers that local authorities have? Are there external reasons, the weather, national political pictures, which effect turnout in local elections?</i>
Purpose and objective of the review	<i>Improve opportunities for Harlow residents to participate in local democracy and decision making</i>
Methodology/approach (methods to be used for gathering evidence)	<i>Testimony from voters who do and don't vote in local elections, who only vote in national elections and those who don't vote at all. Statistics from the council, historic, about voter turnout to spot trends.</i>
Written evidence required	Report back to scrutiny committee.
Potential witnesses	<i>Returning officers Members of the public Counters Councillors and candidates from different political parties (if appropriate)</i>
Potential Stakeholder involvement (who are the stakeholders and how will their views be sought)	A consultation with members of the public would be useful finding out if residents vote in (a) local elections (b) national elections and understanding barriers and reasons that they don't. This should include a mix of genders, ethnic groups and social

	economic groups.
Site visits (where and when)	Visits to local community groups might be useful to increase engagement in this. To maximise participation it would be easier to go to them.
Publicity (methods to be used)	Publicity will be key. Advertising on social media etc. to encourage people to get involved.
Resources (people, expenditure)	Potentially paper copies of consultation would be needed to engage people who do not have access to the internet. Officer time.
Barriers/dangers/risks (any weaknesses or potential pitfalls in the review)	<i>Lack of participation</i>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A large percentage of population of Harlow from across the town and including different genders, ethnic minority groups and social economic backgrounds engaged in the consultation. - A clearer understanding of why people don't engage in local elections and an action plan to allow greater participation in the decision making process.

Appendix B

Polling place / polling station – evaluation checklist

Part A – Current polling place details		
Polling place identifier		
Polling place name		
Polling place address		
Number of electors (If more than one polling station within the polling place, identify split of electors)		
Building availability for future elections/referendums		
Polling place review		
Check	√	Comment
• Are there suitable transport links?		
• Are there any access issues regarding main/busy roads, railways, rivers, etc.?		
• Is the polling place capable of accommodating more than one polling station together with the necessary staff and equipment? If so, could it accommodate all allocated voters going in and out of the polling stations, even where there is a high turnout?		
• Is the building readily available in the event of any unscheduled elections?		
• Is there any possibility that the building may be demolished as part of a new development?		

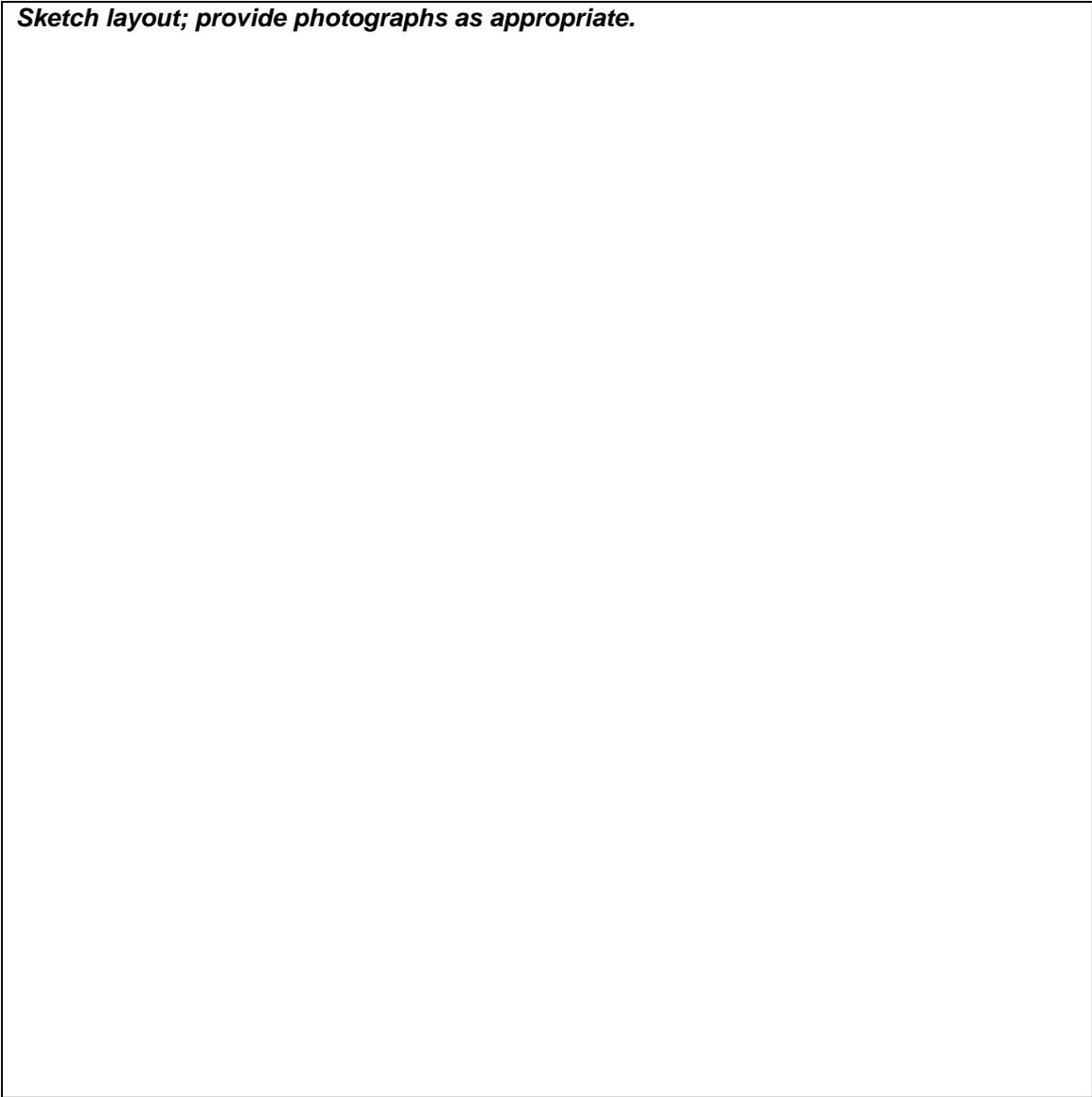
Identify any complaints/comments received from stakeholders at previous electoral events

Part B – External areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are there good public transport links to the polling place?		
• Is the approach to the building safe and free from obstructions and does it have a dropped kerb?		
• Is the building clearly identifiable?		
• Is additional signage required between street and entrance?		
• Is there the facility to put up the required signage for polling day?		
• Are there parking facilities for disabled people?		
• Are there parking facilities for polling staff?		
• Does the approach to the building have external lighting?		
• Does the building have level access? Yes/No. If no –		
• Has a purpose built ramp been installed?		
• If so, does it have a handrail?		
• Does the ramp have a gentle slope?		
• Does the building require a temporary ramp or is there an alternative disabled access?		
• Is the entrance door wide enough for a disabled person using a motorised wheelchair?		
• Are the doors light enough for frail/elderly voters to open?		
• Can the 'Guidance for voters' notice be clearly displayed outside the premises, as required by the election rules?		
• Are there any external security concerns?		
• Can tellers be accommodated outside the building?		

External plan – B1

Show external layout, street name(s), car parking (including disabled car parking), ramps, steps, lighting, appropriate places for signage, etc.

Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.



Part C – Internal areas access and facilities		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Are all doors easy to open (including by wheelchair users) or do they need to be permanently locked back?		
• Are there any internal steps or obstructions/hazards?		
• Are any doormats level with the floor?		
• Is the floor covering non-slip (including in wet weather)?		
• Are there any corridors that may cause access problems?		
• Is there adequate lighting in the corridors?		
• Are there toilet facilities?		
• Is there a kitchen that staff can use?		
• Is the area adequately lit for day and night time?		
• Is there adequate space for signage?		
• How many polling stations can the building accommodate?		
• Does the building have a telephone available (land line) in the event of mobile network problems?		

Internal access leading to polling station(s) – C1

Show internal areas of the building, excluding the actual polling station where voting will take place, including corridors that link to the polling station, kitchen and toilets, and highlight any possible signage requirements and potential hazards. Also indicate door swing direction and ease of opening, any areas of poor lighting, and any areas of uneven floor, etc.

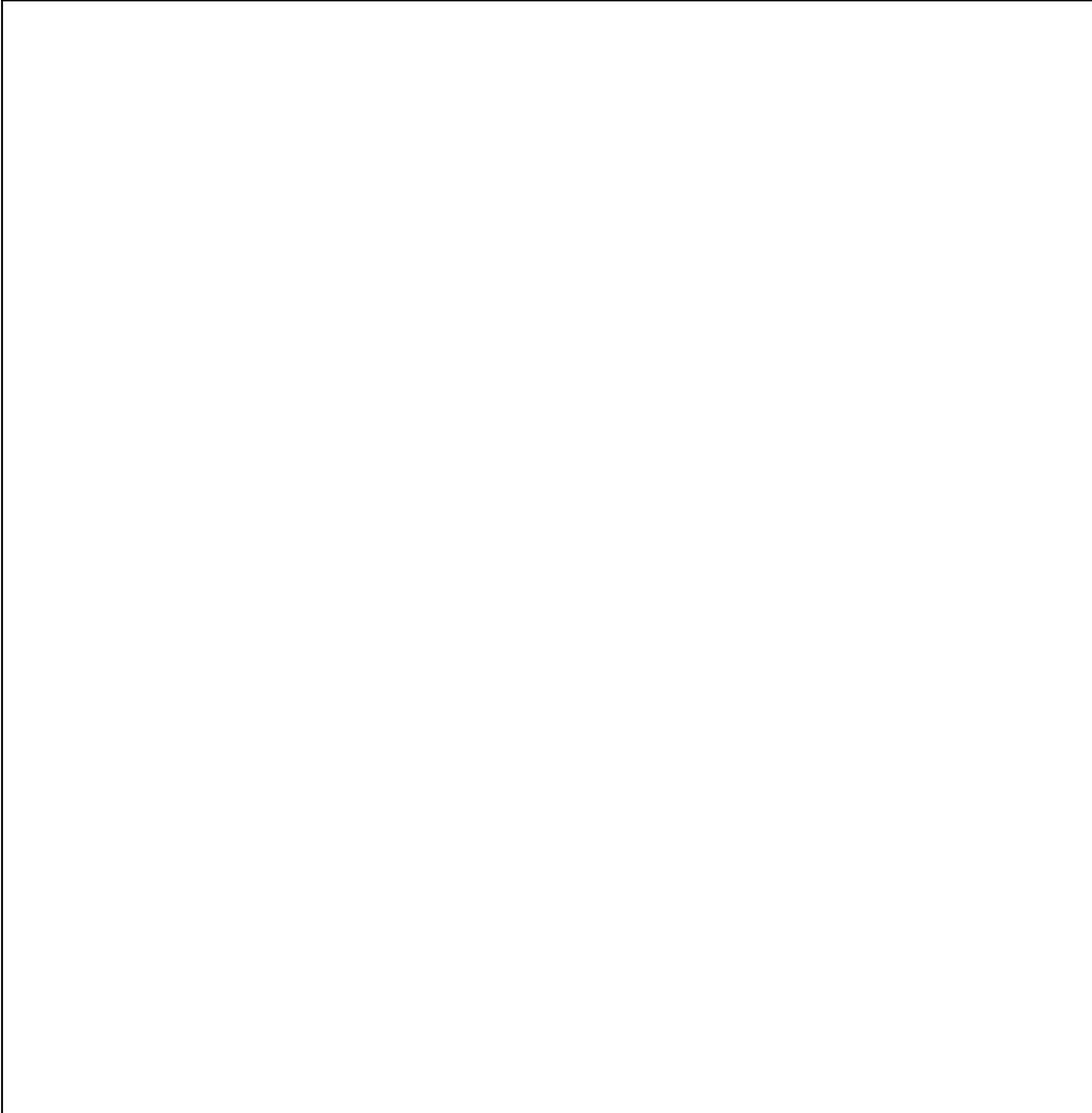
Sketch layout; provide photographs as appropriate.



Part D – The polling station(s)		
Check	(√)	Comments
• Is there sufficient space to accommodate and manage the flow of a high volume of electors in the case of a high turnout of electors?		
• If multiple polling stations need to be provided, are there other rooms available, or can the space be clearly divided to provide adequate room for more than one polling station?		
• Is there sufficient space inside the polling station to comfortably accommodate staff, voters, polling agents and observers?		
• Could ballot booths be positioned in a way that would preserve the secrecy of the ballot, even where there may be a high volume of electors?		
• Is there adequate lighting for day and night time?		
• Is there suitable furniture (tables and chairs) available for all types of election for polling staff and for those voters who may need to rest?		
• Could motorised wheelchairs be accommodated?		
• Can the official notices be clearly displayed, including the large-print version of the ballot paper(s)?		

Internal – The polling station(s) – D1

Identify the size and shape of the area available for polling. Include the position of the door(s), any windows and how the furniture and equipment should be laid out to accommodate all those entitled to be inside the polling station, taking into account access requirements for all voters, including those in wheelchairs, and demonstrating how the space should be used to ensure the most efficient flow of voters and the effective administration of the voting process.



Part E – Comments from stakeholders during consultation

Comment	Name/organisation	Response by (A)RO

Additional comments from (A)RO

Harlow Council Electoral Services Public awareness Strategy

Project Summary

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise public awareness of electoral registration, The Annual Canvass, All Elections, boundary reviews, polling station reviews, electoral arrangements and how to become a candidate. • Increase the number of eligible people registered to vote • Encourage people to vote • Maximise our return of postal votes and reduce errors in postal voting • Introduce our young people to voting and encourage them to register as soon as they are old enough • Engage hard to reach groups to register and vote • Ensure candidates and agents are provided with sufficient information about the election and their role
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All residents of Harlow • Young people / Older people • Other hard to reach groups • Home movers and new residents to the area • Candidates / Agents
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding from the cabinet Office (if available) • We will use the resources from the electoral commission as much as possible • In the electoral services budget we do have a publicity budget of £1,000 • Access support from other council departments, such as communications, council tax and outside agencies
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other council departments, such as Council Tax • Other local authorities e.g. Essex County Council • Electoral Commission / Cabinet Office • Local youth council • Local ethnic minority bodies • Local Schools and Colleges
Lead Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BK – Brian Keane, ERO / RO / Chief Executive • SH – Simon Hill, Head of Governance • AH – Alison Hodgson, Electoral Services Manager • NC – Niel Churchill, Communications Manager

Activities and Tasks – General, for all electors

Activity	Description / resources / channel	Audience	Timing	Lead Officer	Cost estimate	How we measure our success
Internet	<p>Electoral services have its own web pages on the Harlow Council website. www.harlow.gov.uk</p> <p>On our website we provide good general information about electoral registration and voting. This includes specific guidance on who can register, how and when to register, how to vote and absent voting.</p> <p>We include direct links to the Electoral Commission’s website and the register to vote website.</p> <p>We also have information about current elections in a latest news section and historic election results.</p>	All electors	All year round, updated as and when required	AH NC	Staff time	The website remains up to date and relevant in its content
Press releases Social Media	<p>Relevant information is provided to our communications department prior to the annual canvass and any elections or any reviews or other electoral events.</p> <p>We will have a front page banner and news item and relevant posts on the council facebook page and twitter accounts.</p> <p>Comms will liaise with the media and provide the necessary information.</p>	All electors	All year round, updated as and when required	AH NC	Staff time	Public feedback We monitor number of phone calls received to our helpline number.

Harlow Times	Council magazine delivered to every household in Harlow. Comms are given details for an article to be included about the Annual canvass and elections.	All electors	Published quarterly	NC	Staff time	Number of enquiries
Internal council publications	Use weekly information sheet and global emails to publicize electoral events.	Council staff and electors	As and when required	AH	Staff time	Number of enquires
Council Email signature	Use email signature to promote registration by providing a direct link to the register to vote website	All	All year round	AH	Staff time	Number of enquires
Annual Canvass poster	We put up a general poster to advertise the annual canvass. All posters are displayed at the civic centre, Latton Bush Centre, on our website and effectively placed in the locality.	All	Annual canvass	AH	Cost of printing posters, staff time	Number of enquires and registrations.
Annual Canvass info sheet	We provide an information sheet which canvassers deliver with the canvass form in order to provide residents with guidance on how to register and the deadline date to register for the December register.	All electors	Annual canvass	AH	Cost of paper, printing and staff time	Public feedback
Leaflet	We have produced a leaflet to send to send to new residents to encourage them to register online. We have provided it to our council tax and housing department.	Home movers and new residents	All year round (except during the annual canvass)	AH	Cost of leaflets and postage	Number of enquires / new registrations
Elections Notices	We ensure that all statutory notices are published on time and effectively placed in the locality.	All electors	During Electoral Timetable	AH	Cost of paper, printing	We check that the notices are placed appropriately in our

	All notices are displayed at the civic centre, Latton Bush Centre and on our website. The notice of election and notice of poll are placed in all polling stations and various public sites around the town.				and postage.	civic centre. Confirmation slip to be returned.
Poll Cards	We issue poll cards at the earliest opportunity in the election timetable and we aim to make them as informative and helpful as possible, including highlighting any new/different polling stations as well as the deadline dates for applying for or cancelling a postal vote.	All electors				The timely issue of the poll cards
Postal Vote information sheet	We provide a separate guidance sheet with clear instructions on how to complete and return the postal vote application form. In addition we produce a clear and helpful information sheet, which includes pictures that is sent with the posting voting pack. Our helpline number is available clearly on all documentation	All postal voters	Elections	AH	Cost of paper, printing and staff time	Postal vote returns statistics and public comment. Monitor the phone calls that are received.
Weekly data matching with council tax and housing	We obtain a weekly report from council tax and housing in order to encourage those not registered to vote to do so. We will send out new residents a voter registration form.	All new residents	All year round	AH	Cost of printing and postage	Registration returns and electorate data

Activities and Tasks – Targeting and engaging with low registration / hard to reach groups

Activity	Description / resources / channel	Audience	Timing	Lead Officer	Cost estimate	How we measure our success
Engaging young people	We have produced posters and a leaflet aimed at 16/17 year olds, which will be given to schools, colleges, etc for them to display and use with young people. Attend the college during registration week to promote registration.	Young people	All year round, as and when required	AH	Staff time, possible cost of printing posters	Monitor feedback and number of registrations
Liaise with our youth council officer to endeavour to assist in local democracy events	We assist with the Harlow Youth Council elections when required.	16/17 year olds	All year round	AH	Staff time	General feedback
Engaging older people	We send a letter to the Sheltered Housing Managers at the start of the annual canvass advising them about the process and how to help their residents if necessary. We offer large-print copies of our forms / documents.	Elderly residents	Annual canvass	AH	Staff time	The letter is sent out by our Sheltered Housing Manager and feedback is gained from her.
Liaising with care homes	We have produced guidance for care homes information pack which we usually send out during the annual canvass or any other time as necessary.	Residents in a care or residential home	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	We liaise with the managers directly. We monitor any feedback.
Targeting HMOs	We send a letter to all HMO managers to advise them about the annual canvass and what to do.	HMO	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	Monitor canvass returns and feedback. Noticed an increase in the response rate following this activity.

Targeting home movers	We obtain a list of new council tax accounts each week and either send them a leaflet or add them to the register as pending and send the man ITR	Home movers	All year round	AH	Staff time, printing and postage of ITRs	Monitor new registrations
Engaging non-English speakers	We have produced a translation booklet for our canvassers to use when door-knocking.	Non-English residents	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	Canvasser feedback
Engaging non-English speakers	We have liaised with Integration Support Services and HEMU (Harlow Ethnic Minority Umbrella) to gain advice on which 9 alternative languages which should offer from ERS for people to use when registering by telephone at canvass.	Non-English residents	Annual Canvass	AH	Staff time	ERS reports – phone languages used. At present one person has used the polish translation.
Special category electors	We have direct links on our website to the Electoral Commission and register to vote website which details all the information on special category electors. (Please note that Harlow does not have a specific service area, such as a local army barracks)	Special Category Electors	All year round	AH	Staff time	We monitor the number of our special Category electors
Engaging candidates / agents	We provide candidates/agents with a comprehensive information pack which is supported by a face to face briefing session well before election day and includes details such as the polling stations, the count, key contact details, role of tellers and a copy of the code of conduct.	Candidates / Agents	Elections	AH	Staff time	We monitor feedback from candidates/agents

Specific one-off Projects

- Canvass 2009

Placed an advert in our local Princess Alexandra Hospital guide which runs from August 2009 – August 2010. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund.

- Canvass 2009

During the canvass period 2009 we liaised with neighbouring authorities (Basildon, Braintree, Colchester, Maldon, Southend, Rochford, Uttlesford, Chelmsford, Thurrock) to produce a radio campaign which was carried out by the actor Matt Horne. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund. Basildon have carried out a survey of residents to obtain feedback.

- Parliamentary Election 2010

In addition to the registration advert detailed above two adverts were made ready for use when the general election 2010 was called. This was aired across Essex during the week of election with information about polling day. This was funded by the MOJ Participation fund. Basildon have carried out a survey of residents to obtain feedback.

- 2011 - sent an 18th birthday card to all attainers on our register. Unfortunately it was too costly to continue this activity. (We tried to gain a list of young people aged 16/17 to ensure that they are not missed off the register. We have made contact with Essex county Council but they have been unable to supply us with any information.)

- Parliamentary Referendum 2011

We distributed posters to various public sites across the town e.g. public library. We arranged for an advert to go in the local newspaper. We had a link to the public information booklet on our website as well as victor the vote counter.

- 2012 - A meeting was held with a new Councillor who is responsible for youth & Citizenship where it was explained what we have done and she was given a copy of our poster and leaflet.

- District Election May 2012

We arranged for an advert to go in the local newspaper.

- Police & Crime Commissioner Election Nov 2012

We distributed the Electoral Commission's pink poster to various public sites across the town e.g. public library, including all polling stations. As this was a national election radio and TV adverts were arranged by the Electoral Commission and the PARO. We included links on our website to the Home Office, Essex Police Authority and the Electoral Commission.

We had a number of complaints from people who had not heard anything about the election or the candidates. They had not received the information booklet. They could not access a website to get information on the candidates and had to wait weeks before being sent the information in the post.

- 2018 - Visited the local college to encourage students to register
- 2019 - Visited the local college to encourage students to register

Appendix D

Local Elections Turnout Consultation Questionnaire

Introduction

The turnout in elections, particularly local elections, has decreased steadily over the years in Harlow. The same picture is seen nationally.

At the local elections in May 2021, the voter turnout in Harlow were as follows:

- District – 32.42%
- County – 32.41%
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner – 32.35%

The Council is undertaking a review to better understand why residents feel disconnected from local politics; and why the turnout in the local elections were lower than for the national elections. As part of this review, the Council has devised a questionnaire to establish the reasons residents are not voting in local elections.

The questionnaire will run **from 20 September 2021 to 1 November 2021**.

The questionnaire will be available on the Council's website, sent by email to those who have provided an email to Electoral Registration. Hard copies will also be available at Contact Harlow.

If you have any queries about the questionnaire, you can contact:

- Alison Hodgson (01279) 446038 alison.hodgson@harlow.gov.uk
- Adam Rees (01279) 446057 adam.rees@harlow.gov.uk

Privacy Information

This questionnaire is intended to be anonymous, and we do not wish to collect any personal information that can identify you as an individual. However there are parts of the questionnaire where you may end up providing this information (such as sections stating, 'if you provide details below' and so on).

Where you provide any personal information within this questionnaire that could identify you or another person as an individual, it will be kept confidential and will be securely deleted as soon as we become aware of it.

Your completed questionnaire will be shared with our chosen service provider for surveys and questionnaires, Smart Survey in accordance with our Data Sharing Agreement with them.

For more information on how we collect, use, and protect personal information generally, as well as your rights as a data subject please view our main privacy notice on our website by visiting <http://www.harlow.gov.uk/privacy-notice>

The Questions

1. Are you registered to vote?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

2. If you not registered to vote, why not?

- Confusion about the voter registration process
- None of the political parties represent my views
- Don't know enough about the political parties and their policies
- Vote is unlikely to affect outcome
- Not eligible to vote (e.g. due to nationality)
- Other (please state):

3. Which type of elections do you normally vote in?

- District
- County
- Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Parliamentary
- None

4. Which voting method do you normally use?

- In-person
- Postal
- Proxy
- Don't Vote

5. How likely would the following stop you from voting?

	Very likely	Likely	Neither likely/Nor unlikely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Didn't know candidates or their policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Very likely	Likely	Neither likely/Nor unlikely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
Couldn't park at or get to the polling station	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polling station access was difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor weather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parties that stood in my ward don't represent my views	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Confusion about the voting process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please state):

6. Have any of the matters set out in question 5 ever stopped you from voting in the past?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

7. If yes to question 6, which of the following stopped you from voting?

- Didn't know candidates or their policies
- Couldn't park at or get to the polling station
- Polling station access was difficult
- Poor weather
- Work commitments
- Parties that stood in my ward don't represent my views
- Confusion about the voting process
- Other (please state):

It is well known that nationally turnout at local elections varies by gender and by age. The Council would like to gain a better understand of the reasons behind this. Similarly, whilst the Council has criteria to ensure polling stations are accessible to all, it would also like to gain a better understand of whether those with disabilities find certain polling stations difficult to access. By knowing the ward you live in, the Council can focus on the polling stations which may have issues.

8. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify):

9. Please select your age category

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 or older

10. Please select the ward you live in

- Bush Fair
- Church Langley
- Great Parndon
- Harlow Common
- Little Parndon and Hare Street
- Mark Hall
- Netteswell
- Old Harlow
- Staple Tye
- Sumners and Kingsmoor
- Toddbrook
- Don't Know

11. Do you have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2021/22

Work	Tuesday 13 July 2021	Tuesday 14 September 2021	Tuesday 7 December 2021	Tuesday 8 February 2022	Tuesday 15 March 2022
Policing and Community Safety Annual Review				Agreement of questions	Q&A with Police
Delivery of Council House Building Programme			Update		
Housing and Accommodation Requirements for Adults with a Moderate /Severe Learning Disability	Final report				
Allotments	Review Submission Form		Report		
Domestic Abuse in Harlow (to be included in Police Annual Review)	Review Submission Form				
Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment)	Review Submission Form			Report	
Turnout in Local Elections	Review Submission Form	Report	Final Report		
Antisocial Behaviour (to be dealt with through pre-scrutiny of Community Safety Strategy)	Review Submission Form	Q&A with Portfolio Holder			
Online Gambling	Review Submission				

	Form				
Call In Sub Committee Procedures	Report				