

From: [Eynon Dana](#)
To: standards.evidence@gtnet.gov.uk
Sent: 09 May 2006 10:16
Subject: Review of the Electoral Commission

Please find contained herein comments from the Electoral Staff at Torfaen County Borough Council. Where we have not mentioned a question specifically, we have no comment. We would prefer for our submission not to be included within the report.

The Regulation of donations to political parties

We are unsure of how far the EC's power extends in this regard but wondered whether an overseas elector can give donations and whether some can donate lots of £5,000 or £4,000 every week/month and still not be registered?

Giving advice and assistance on the conduct of elections and referendums

A number of EROs and election staff felt that the Electoral Commission lacked the necessary knowledge to give such advice and this was borne out by early guidance material being legally incorrect. This led to a lack of confidence in the EC, which is now growing. The guidance material for the General Election 2005 was good. Recent guidance on running election services in Wales was good but still contained some factual inaccuracies and omissions. There is scope for the role to be developed further so that there is national consistency.

Questions about the mandate of The Electoral Commission

The EC should be a one stop shop with all electoral matters resting with them. It is confusing to know which department to contact for which election and we would be inclined to call the EC first in any event. The promotion of public awareness and of participation in elections should rest with the EC alone and sufficient funds should be made available to make this meaningful. The "Don't do politics" campaign reached a lot of people (they trust the EC because it is politically neutral) and this should be continued throughout the year, especially around registration time and over a variety of media – TV, media, newspapers. Lack of funding has meant that it is only rolled out near to an election (the electorate get suspicious or cynical when this happens) and only certain media are used thereby diluting the message. Engaging the electorate is a 24/7/365 activity and sufficient funding should be given to enable this to happen. Current large scale advertising and promotion is too myopic.

The Governance of the Electoral Commission

The EC should always remain independent; while it is legally independent would there be an issue about total independence because its funding comes from Government and could/would this level of funding change depending on the majority party? Commissioners must be non political and should be servants of the Crown. Should there be a term of office past which a commissioner cannot continue to serve?

The accountability of The Electoral Commission

The Speaker is political and makes all the appointments bar one, therefore, it is important that The Speaker's Committee should be politically balanced to guard against the perception of political influence.

Many thanks

Dana Eynon
HEAD OF DEMOCRACY
Tel: 01495 766072 (internal 6072)
Fax: 01495 766079 (internal 6079)
Ext E-Mail: dana.eynon@torfaen.gov.uk