

**West Berkshire Council's response to the Committee of Standards in Public Life Review of the Electoral Commission.**

<b>Questions about the mandate of The Electoral Commission</b>	
<b>1</b>	Is the mandate set out in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 conducive to the efficient and effective operation of The Electoral Commission as the regulator of elections and party political donations in the UK?
	<i>The Electoral Commission is currently NOT a regulator of elections, it only regulates Political Parties and donations. Whilst the mandate would be conducive this would only be when the electoral commission is made a true Regulator of Elections.</i>
<b>2</b>	In the light of the experience of the last five years are there any appropriate revisions to the mandate of the Commission that should be made to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000?
	<i>It is recommended that for administrative reasons, the deadline for registering as a Political Party should be slightly earlier in the election timetable.</i>
<b>3</b>	In particular, is there an appropriate balance between the executive and advisory functions of the Commission?
	<i>No. It is suggested that there should be one body that has more executive powers.</i>
<b>4</b>	Has the appropriate balance been struck in the division of responsibilities between The Electoral Commission and other public bodies in promoting public awareness of and participation in elections and referendums?
	<i>The EC is responsible for all national publicity, but at a local level, local authorities should give the publicity they think is appropriate for local circumstances. Some local liaison on local advertising would be appreciated, particularly when elections are only being held in part of advertising areas, as advertising for the recent local elections caused a lot of confusion in areas where there were not elections.</i>
<b>5</b>	Does The Electoral Commission operate as a strategic regulator in exercising its responsibilities in relation to: (a) the registration of political parties; (b) the regulation of donations to parties; and (c) the control of campaign finance?
	<i>The Council has no comment to make on this question.</i>

Questions about the governance of The Electoral Commission	
6	Does the independent legal status of The Electoral Commission provide it with sufficient independence from Government?
	<i>No. The Government controls the financing and appointing of Commissioners. Some other models need to be investigated to achieve greater independence from Political influences.</i>
7	Is the financing of The Electoral Commission - through a combination of income received by the Commission for services, and money provided by Parliament from the Consolidated Fund - compatible with its independent regulatory role? Is there a more appropriate way of Financing The Electoral Commission?
	<i>We do not expect that the Electoral Commission should ever be self financing. We do not think that there is an alternative model for financing the Electoral Commission at this time.</i>
8	Are the restrictions on who can be an Electoral Commissioner appropriate in the light of the responsibilities of Commissioners under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendum?
	<i>Yes. There is a need to ensure their political independence.</i>
Questions about the accountability of the Electoral Commission	
9	Does the Speaker's Committee of the House of Commons constitute an appropriate accountability mechanism for The Electoral Commission
	<i>No. For the reason that the speakers committee has responsibility for appointing Commissioners it is suggested that another body independent of government members (who are not politically affiliated to a party) become involved in the mechanism.</i>
10	If it does, are there any incremental changes to its composition, mandate or procedures which would contribute to its effectiveness?
	<i>See 9 Above</i>
11	If it does not, is there an alternative mechanism to make The Electoral Commission more accountable?
	<i>See 9 Above</i>
12	Are the devolved administrations of the UK appropriately incorporated into the accountability mechanism?
	<i>Devolved administrations of the UK should be incorporated into the same accountability mechanism.</i>
13	Has the Parliamentary Parties' Panel and its decentralised variants been an effective way of The Electoral Commission engaging in

	dialogue with political parties? Is there a more effective way of conducting this dialogue?
	<i>Not appropriate for response.</i>
<b>General question</b>	
14	The Committee would find it valuable to receive evidence about the development and operation of policy areas within the remit of The Electoral Commission that highlight issues regarding the Commission's mandate, governance and accountability.
	<p><i>In other countries where Commissions exist they tend to stand independently from the Government.</i></p> <p><i>Currently Responsibilities between DCA and EC are not clearly defined. Some clarity would be welcomed in demarcation of roles and responsibilities.</i></p> <p><i>It should be noted that the Electoral Commission have offered tremendous improvements in the support network for Electoral Administrators, the public and Candidates. They serve as a first point of contact and offer consistent approaches and policy guidance.</i></p> <p><i>As mentioned before we feel that the EC should take on more regulatory functions.</i></p> <p><i>The EC was set up as an advisory body and it appears that the Government does not seem to take the advice it offers. We are disappointed that the government has seen fit not to take advantage of some of the policy recommendations made by the EC which usually have been thoroughly investigated and consulted upon.</i></p> <p><i>The inclusion of Parish Matters into the remit of the Electoral Commission would be welcomed.</i></p> <p><i>There are still functions (Election claims and boundaries) that have not transferred from the DCA to the EC. We think this delay should be addressed to ensure clarity of roles and consistency of approach.</i></p>