

Chris Skidmore MP
Parliamentary Secretary (Minister for the Constitution)
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

17 October 2016

Dear Minister

Response to Sir Eric Pickles' review and recommendations on electoral fraud

I am writing with the Electoral Commission's full response to Sir Eric Pickles' review of electoral fraud, which follows our letter of 5 September when I shared our initial thoughts on the report with you. As you know, we welcomed the review when it was launched and submitted written evidence, and as our response shows, we support a significant number of Sir Eric's final recommendations.

As we set out in the introduction to our response, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Returning Officers (ROs), the police and the Commission have made significant progress in improving the response to electoral fraud in recent years. As Sir Eric's report makes clear, however, there remains more that could be done. Our response sets out the work that we will continue to deliver and identifies new work that we will now plan to help prevent electoral fraud at future elections.

This will include continuing to ensure that EROs, ROs, the police and prosecuting authorities are well-equipped to prevent electoral fraud and to detect and prosecute offenders if fraud is committed. It will also include ensuring that voters understand their fundamental rights to vote in secret and without interference or undue influence, and that campaigners and others understand there can be no place in UK elections for behaviour which prevents voters freely exercising those rights.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight again that there is also more that Government can do to help, including taking forward recommendations for changes to legislation and electoral processes that the Electoral Commission and the UK's Law

The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8YZ

Tel: 020 7271 0500
Fax: 020 7271 0505
info@electoralcommission.org.uk
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Putting voters first

An independent body established by Act of the UK Parliament



Commissions have previously recommended. We are pleased that Sir Eric's report has supported and reiterated many of these recommendations. In particular, his report supports our recommendation from 2014 for voters to provide proof of their identity in polling stations. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your officials to help deliver this important change, building on the work we have already published and shared with you to cost potential options for implementing this change.

Our research clearly shows that when electoral fraud is committed, voters are the victims. For this reason, we will continue to focus on making sure that political parties, candidates and campaigners understand there is no place in UK elections for behaviour which prevents voters freely exercising their rights.

We remain concerned, however, about the evidence from our research with voters that highlights an underlying perception among a significant proportion of the population that electoral fraud is a problem. This research has also shown that unacceptable activity which many people consider electoral fraud – including pressure and intimidation both in the home and outside polling stations – may not be reported by victims. We have in recent years already established a partnership with Crimestoppers, the anonymous crime reporting charity, to help address this and will continue to explore ways that we can do more. I anticipate that developing this programme of work in a way that improves awareness with vulnerable voters will be a key focus for us in the future.

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss any of these matters in more detail we would be pleased to do so; your office can contact Megan Phillips, in our public affairs team on mphillips@electoralcommission.org.uk or on 0207 271 0714 to arrange this.

I have copied this letter to Sir Eric and I would like to take the opportunity to thank him and his team for all their work on the review. I am also writing in similar terms to Scottish Government Ministers and will be placing copies of these letters on our website.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Watson
Chair

Approved by the Chair and electronically signed in her absence.