

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill 2015

House of Lords Report Stage Day 2 briefing

15 July 2015

Introduction

This briefing sets out the Electoral Commission's view on key amendments tabled to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, ahead of the final day of Report Stage on Wednesday 15 July.

We have not commented on all amendments tabled in relation to this Bill, and the absence of comment does not imply that we support them. In particular, decisions on the franchise for the elections are important issues for Parliament to decide on, and the Commission will comment on the practical implications and workability of any amendments to the Bill in these areas.

This briefing covers:

- Amendments relating to governance arrangements for local government: entitlement to vote (the franchise)

New Clause: Governance arrangements for local government: entitlement to vote

The policy intention of Amendment 73 is to lower the voting age to 16 for local government elections, including mayoral combined authority elections. The Commission does not take a view on the principle of lowering the voting age to 16 for local government or other elections, as we recognise that the definition of the franchise is properly the responsibility of elected representatives to decide.

The Commission has recommended that when any policy maker or legislator is considering legislation for referendums or elections with a franchise including 16 and 17 year olds, they consider the need to ensure legislation concerning the extension of the franchise is clear six months prior to the beginning of the canvass. This is to allow administrators time to plan for the canvass and public awareness activities,

including political literacy initiatives, to encourage the registration of 15-17 year olds who would be eligible to vote at the next scheduled May elections.

Lowering the voting age for local government elections would mean that some 14 and 15 year olds will also be included in the electoral registers as attainers – attainers are people who will become 16 within the twelve month period starting on the 1 December after they make their application. Any secondary legislation would therefore need to include specific measures providing for the registration of those aged under 16, including provision for the protection of personal information.

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