From:	FOI
To:	[redacted]
Subject:	FOI 153/18 - At risk areas of electoral fraud - Response
Date:	01 November 2018 09:44:06
Attachments:	Burnley Borough Council Application - Electoral Integrity Funding - Feb ....pdf Burnley Borough Council - Feedback - Redacted.pdf

---

Dear [redacted]

Our Ref: FOI 153/18

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated **26 September 2018.**

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and regrets that on this occasion we have not done so.

Your request is in bold below followed by our response.

1. **Firstly I would like an up to date list of the top 20 places in the UK for electoral fraud (reported, suspected, alleged or otherwise) Similar to the top 16 mentioned in the 2014 report.**

2. **I would also like to know, following Burnley's place as one of the 16 areas most likely to suffer electoral fraud, in the 2014 report, what steps were taken to prevent electoral fraud within the area.**

3. **Could you also please let me know, which constituencies in Burnley are at the highest risk of electoral fraud.**

Our response is as follows:

We hold the information you have requested.

1. **Firstly I would like an up to date list of the top 20 places in the UK for electoral fraud (reported, suspected, alleged or otherwise) Similar to the top 16 mentioned in the 2014 report.**

The Commission does not maintain a single list of places in the UK for electoral fraud. We do however provide information on our website regarding allegations received by Police forces across England and Wales on an annual basis. The most recent data, alongside an analysis of the data for 2017 is available here: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-fraud/data-and-analysis

In advance of any set of polls the Commission reviews every local authority with scheduled elections and undertakes an analysis of the risk of electoral fraud within each local authority. This information is then used to inform our approach to supporting Returning Officers to manage the risk of electoral fraud throughout the election period.

2. **I would also like to know, following Burnley's place as one of the 16 areas most likely to suffer electoral fraud, in the 2014 report, what steps were taken to prevent electoral fraud within the area.**

We have identified two documents within the scope of your request. These are

attached and named below:

A) Burnley Borough Council Application – Electoral Integrity Funding
B) Burnley Borough Council – Feedback

3. **Could you also please let me know, which constituencies in Burnley are at the highest risk of electoral fraud.**

The information we publish on our website only refers to allegations received by police forces pertaining to a local authority and does not break it down by ward or constituency. We do not have any further details on this breakdown.

I trust that this information satisfies your request. The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority, but in some circumstances we cannot responsibly release requested information, and we ask for your understanding in this regard.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information-requests/how-do-I-make-an-foi-request

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: https://ico.org.uk/

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Access to Information Officer (FOI and DPA)

The Electoral Commission
FOI@electoralcommission.org.uk
electoralcommission.org.uk

Feedback form

Cabinet Office would like to draw on the experience of local authorities to understand what measures are the most effective in preventing electoral fraud. Please provide us with your input by completing the form below.

Name of local authority: Burnley Borough Council

Contact name and number: Tom Forshaw [redacted]

Which of your proposals were the most effective and why? (Any statistics you have will be most helpful)

The activities which involved face to face contact gave the most added value. These included

- Engaging with three Asian Women's Groups to promote the secrecy of the vote – a small number of people (around 30 in total) but influential in the community
- Engaging with College students and Attainers to promote IER, Voting and secrecy of the vote

The other area of activity that worked well was joint communications with neighbouring Councils to promote integrity through radio and print media and give a consistent message to communities across administrative boundaries

Social; media is an effective medium and allows us to target over 8000 followers and will develop as a key tool for communication

Did you encounter any difficulties implementing your proposals? What were they?

None. The funding helped to offset limited staff capacity to deliver on top of organising combined Local and Parliamentary Elections.

Although we are not complacent our local communities and local Party organisations appear to have become increasingly receptive to our integrity messages. It was also clear that at a national level at least one Political Party was giving strong messages promoting integrity to local Party Election Agents.

Were any proposals less effective than you anticipated? Why?

The key issue wasn't one of difficulty or effectiveness. We had a very unusual situation in our key target Ward of Daneshouse with Stoneyholme as the Local Election was not contested and the Labour candidate was elected without a vote. Integrity issues and risks tend to be lower for County and national elections.

Local communications work was overlaid by national publicity so there was an element of duplication but that only served to reinforce messages

Is there anything you would do differently?
Put an even greater emphasis on face to face engagement as a key prevention tool

What advice do you have for local authorities that might be thinking of taking forward any of your proposals?
Plan your communication and engagement well ahead of the pre-election period – at least 6 months so that plans, products and people are in place and partnership with the Police is well established

Joint working with neighbouring Councils and the Police, including joint delivery and information and intelligence sharing is cost effective and can increase impact

Face to face engagement takes time but helps to build relationships and trust so has a legacy that lasts beyond a single election.

Early engagement with Election Agents and Candidates to give clear messages on integrity can influence their campaigning strategy before it is fixed e.g. whether they use party branded Postal Vote application forms

Please add any further comments that you think Cabinet Office would find useful.
The funding was a very welcome boost for our work around voter engagement, promoting integrity and confidence in the voting system. If it is to be offered for future occasions this would ideally be a minimum of six months before the election so we can integrate it better with our other planned engagement activity.

Clear messages about integrity and campaigning by national Political Party organisations to local Election Agents are invaluable.

Please email the completed form to [redacted]

APPLICATION: ELECTORAL INTEGRITY FUNDING - February 2015

Name of LA: **Burnley Borough Council**

Name and position of contact at LA (and contact details):
Tom Forshaw
Head Of Chief Executive's Office/Deputy Returning Officer
Burnley Borough Council, Town Hall, Burnley
BB11 9SA
Tel. [redacted]

Amount of funding requested: **£25,500**

[redacted]

How will the funds be used?

Increased Security
Enhanced Police presence and visibility pre-election, on Election Day and Count

Polling Stations
A Red Amber Green assessment will identify higher risk Polling Stations and the Police will be asked to commit extra resources throughout the Poll at those Stations
£1500

Postal Votes
Uniformed Police presence in previously identified higher risk areas timed to coincide with the delivery of Postal Votes This will be coordinated with Royal Mail.
£1500

Count
Police will attend the Count in line with existing arrangements. Police attendance may be enhanced within existing resources based on joint assessment. Provision will be made for enhanced non-police security presence to control access to and from the Count venue and ensure good order during the Count. Police will act in support.
£700

Enhanced level of Police support to ensure secure overnight storage of Local Election Ballots Ballot Boxes will be taken from the Count venue following the Parliamentary Election Count for secure storage in the Town Hall. A police presence will be requested to escort the Boxes to the Town Hall, confirm their secure storage in a room monitored by CCTV and then escorted back to the Count venue on Friday to complete the Local Count.
£400

Handling Complaints and supporting Polling Station staff
Additional staffing out of core hours to support all complaints – particular focus will be in the period following issues of Postal Votes and on Election Day itself.
This support will be provided to the Acting Returning Officer/RO & Deputy Acting Returning Officer/DRO to log all complaints and deal with the less complex or high risk issues under the direction of the leaving them free to address more serious and complex issues
£5000

Additional support will be provided on Election day in the form of additional Polling Station Inspectors able to make more frequent visits to the higher risk Stations as well as respond to Borough wide issues which may stretch our normal level of support
£1000

Postal Voting
Additional support to assist with advice on completion of applications, subsequent checking and, where necessary/requested, home visits to advise on completion of Postal Voting papers and/or collection
£3000

Engagement

Outreach work with vulnerable, hard to reach and other target groups:

- To maximise registration
- To explain the voting process including the Dos and Don'ts around postal voting

This work will focus on

- Asian women's groups
- Other people in communities where English may not be the first language
- Attainers/young voters
- Private rented sector tenants

£3000

Leaflet to all Households
This will give all the information on registering to vote and emphasise then secrecy of the vote whether in a Polling Station or Postal Vote with added Dos and Don'ts information
£3500

Design and production of leaflet to all postal Voters on Dos and Don'ts
This will go out with the PV pack
£2200

Media promotion of Integrity and Registration information

4 page Centre Spread in local newspaper promoting registration, voting and related key messages
£1000

Broadcast information using local radios covering Borough area
£1100

Use Social Media to promote messages to our 7528 Twitter followers and monitor election related activity including out of hours work and liaison with Police as necessary
£500

Translation of specific material to support engagement work
£600

What will the funding achieve?

The range of actions proposed above will help to maintain and build confidence in the election process as well as providing an additional measure of reassurance to electors, candidates, agents and the media

An additional level of resource will provide the ARO/RO with the capacity to respond quickly during periods when core election staff will be heavily committed in election activity will help maintain confidence in the election process. Police resources will also be appropriately enhanced to maintain our joint approach

Engagement activity will educate and encourage first time or infrequent voters as well as those in vulnerable or hard to reach groups

A template for ongoing work at future elections following a post-election evaluation of the impact of the Integrity Programme. This will be carried out with contributions from the Police and neighbouring Boroughs who are also eligible for this funding.

Please complete and return to [redacted] **asap** but in any event by **Friday 27 February 2015**.