

Bath and North East Somerset Council
Request for Information

**Information Governance Team -
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26th September 2017

Ms Archer

Dear Ms Archer

Internal Review Request 1357/17 re Case Ref 986/17

Thank you for your request for an internal review dated 14th August 2017. We can now respond as follows.

Request History

On 8th August we responded to your request received on 12th June as follows:

“Requested Information

Please explain what efforts you make to ensure that people without a permanent address are, nevertheless, registered to vote.

How many Form ITR-N-E were processed prior to the General Election on 8th June?

How much money was spent on alerting residents of Bath and North East Somerset to the deadline for voter registration?

Response

We processed 52 applications to register by way of local connection (form ITR-N-E), we now have a total of 85 electors registered in this way.

The communications team produced their own social media posts (in-house) to inform people of the registration deadline, postal voting and election day for the June 8 general election. There were no additional costs/ resources”.

Internal Review

On 14th August we received your request for an internal in which you stated:

“I am writing to request an internal review of Bath and North East Somerset Council's handling of my FOI request 'Electoral Registration'.

In the first instance, the council's response to my Fol took almost twice as long as the law allows. It should have been sent by 10th July but wasn't, in fact, available until 8th August.

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Secondly, the Fol appeared to disappear into a black hole and if I hadn't contacted Chris Salmon directly, may still be unanswered.

Thirdly, it isn't clear who has actually answered the Fol so it isn't possible to be sure that this internal review will be conducted by someone else.

As for the substance of the response, were the 52 'local connection' applications the total since the form ITR-N-E came into existence, or the number of applications over the year prior to the General Election, or what? And if there are now 85 electors registered in this way, does that mean 33 have registered since the General Election?

And while you have answered the second part of this query, you have not informed me 'what efforts you make to ensure that people without a permanent address are, nevertheless, registered to vote.'

I also asked 'how much money was spent on alerting residents of Bath and North East Somerset to the deadline for voter registration?' Is your answer implying that the council ONLY produced its own 'social media posts'. Of what, exactly, did they comprise and what proportion/socio-economic groups, of the population of Bath and North East Somerset did they reach?"

Determination and Action Required

I have now reviewed your request, together with our response and your request for an internal review. I can confirm that the initial response was sent by the Information Governance Manager after information had been provided to the Information Governance Team by both the press office and Electoral Services. I apologise for the delay in the initial response.

On review it would appear that your questions relating to the number of ITR-N-E forms processed and money spent on advertising were both answered.

In response to your first question we can confirm:

Please explain what efforts you make to ensure that people without a permanent address are, nevertheless, registered to vote.

As part of the annual voter registration canvass, which takes place every year between August and December, we liaise with Julian House to encourage any electors without a fixed address to submit a registration to register to vote.

We can also now respond to your follow up questions as follows:

"As for the substance of the response, were the 52 'local connection' applications the total since the form ITR-N-E came into existence, or the number of applications over the year prior to the General Election, or what? And if there are now 85 electors registered in this way, does that mean 33 have registered since the General Election?"

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According to our records, before the general election was announced on 18 April 2017, there were 17 electors registered to vote by way of local connection. When the general election was announced and before the deadline to register to vote for that election, we processed an additional 67 local connection applications. This means that on Thursday 8 June we had 84 electors registered to vote by way of local connection. We currently have 85 local connection registrations, which means one application has been received since the deadline to register to vote for the general election.

“I also asked 'how much money was spent on alerting residents of Bath and North East Somerset to the deadline for voter registration?' Is your answer implying that the council ONLY produced its own 'social media posts'. Of what, exactly, did they comprise and what proportion/socio-economic groups, of the population of Bath and North East Somerset did they reach?”

The publicity strategy which the Council puts in place for an election is normally determined by the type of election and the election timetable. General elections are widely publicised at national level via various media, i.e. Electoral Commission campaigns, TV and radio adverts, news and newspapers, etc.; the role of the Council is to complement these activities with simple and cost-effective social media posts, rather than investing money in duplicating what is already available. The social media posts were aimed at reaching anyone with internet access (including mobile phones). Please see timelines on the pages www.twitter.com/bathnes and <https://www.facebook.com/bathnes> for the social media posts around the electoral registration process and the election itself. With reference to the proportion/socio-economic groups reached by the social media posts, this information is not available.

No further action required.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to appeal directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or by visiting their website: www.ico.org.uk

Kind regards,

Jeff Wring
Divisional Director - Risk & Assurance