

Body: Council
Date: 18 May 2010
Subject: Parliamentary election held on 6 May 2010
Report of: Chief Executive (and Acting Returning Officer)

Ward(s): All

Purpose: To inform the Council of the result of the election held on 6 May 2010 and related statistical information.

Contact: Robert Cottrill, Chief Executive. Telephone 01323 415002 or internally on extension 5002.
David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager. Telephone 01323 415022 or internally on extension 5022.
Tracey Pannett, Electoral Services Manager Telephone 01323 415074 or internally on extension 5074.

Recommendation: To note the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper reports on the election held on Thursday 6 May 2010. Details of the results and of the candidate elected are given together with other related information. Although not a requirement to report these results to Council (unlike the practice for Borough Council elections) it is considered appropriate to do so in order to maintain a running record of elections held in Eastbourne and for a summary document such as this to be retained permanently in the public domain.
- 1.2 The constituency's boundaries had been altered for this election. In simple terms we retained Willingdon (which includes Jevington and Wannock) (electorate c.6,150) and of course the entire Borough of Eastbourne. We lost East Dean and Friston (electorate c.1,400) and also Westdean (electorate c.60) to the Lewes parliamentary constituency. We also gained c.850 electors in the old Watermill ward of Polegate who in 2005 voted in the Lewes parliamentary constituency. This small part of the parish of Polegate was transferred to Willingdon a few years ago and is now in Willingdon and Jevington parish and the Willingdon ward of Wealden District Council.

1.3 A total of 8 candidates stood for election representing 5 political parties (British National Party, Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrats and the UK Independence Party) together with 3 independent candidates.

2.0 Results

2.1 A copy of the notice of result is at appendix 1. Stephen Lloyd for the Liberal Democrats won the election with a 3,435 majority over the Conservative Nigel Waterson, the former Member of Parliament. Nigel Waterson had served as MP since 1992.

2.2 The share of the total vote across the Constituency for each of the parties and the 3 independent candidates was as follows:

British National Party	1.80%
Conservative Party	40.72%
Labour Party	4.79%
Liberal Democrats	47.31%
UK Independence Party	2.50%
Baldry (Independent)	0.19%
Gell (Independent)	0.14%
Shing (Independent)	2.55%

(Note: Figures rounded to 2 decimal places).

2.2 The six candidates who polled 5% or less all lost their £500 deposits.

3.0 Electoral turnout figures

3.1 The total local electorate was 77,840. Overall the electoral turnout was 67.07%. This compared with an electorate of 74,759 and a turnout of 65% at the previous general election held May 2005.

4.0 Poll cards and registration

4.1 Poll cards were again printed in a larger format with additional information advising how to apply for a postal vote. The poll cards were despatched about 3 weeks prior to election day.

4.1 The deadline for registering to vote had recently been extended. In the past, once the notice of election had been posted, it was not possible to register. Now, people can register up to 11 working days before polling day (for this election by midnight Tuesday 20 April). In the 5 weeks immediately before the deadline we processed nearly 1,200 new registrations.

5.0 Absent Voting

5.1 The significant increase in the numbers of people having postal votes has been maintained. The total number of postal votes sent out for these elections was 15,110. Postal voters comprised nearly 20% of the electorate and of all the votes received nearly a quarter were received from postal voters.

5.2 All postal voters' signatures and dates of birth are now held on computer from information provided when application is made. The voting procedure requires postal voters to sign and give their date of birth when returning their vote. This requires signature recognition software to be linked to our electoral computer system. The whole process is very time consuming but we successfully achieved our objective in checking all returned postal votes including those handed in at polling stations without any delay to the count. Data from the Willingdon postal voters was successfully imported into our scanning system and avoided the need to transfer these ballots to Crowborough and back for checking.

5.3 The closing date for postal vote applications was 5pm Tuesday 20 April. By late that evening we had completed the transfer of encrypted data to the printers. Our postal votes and ballot papers were printed before the weekend and delivered to Royal Mail on the Saturday (24 April) for despatch to voters. Daily opening sessions commenced on Thursday 29 April.

5.4 The following table shows trends in postal voting in local council elections since 2002:

Year	Sent out	Returned	% return
2004	10,178	7,507	73.7
2005	13,336	10,733	80.5
*2005	14,546	11,872	81.62
2006	12,999	9,168	70.5
2007	12,202	10,013	82.7
2009	12,792	9,199	71.91
*2010	15,110	13,262	87.77

* relate to the parliamentary constituency, all other figures relate to borough area only.

5.6 **Rejected Postal Votes:**

Rejection reason:	2009 (County and Euro)	2010 (Parl)
Without ballot paper:	42	22
Signature absent or did not match	73	189
Date of birth not given or incorrect	34	103
Missing signature and date of birth	53	62
No valid postal voters' statement	16	25
Total number rejected:	218	401

5.7 The total number of replacement postal voting ballot papers issued was 52. These were provided to people who had either not received their papers or had lost them (41 in total) or had spoilt them and needed replacements (11 in total). Proof of identity with photograph is generally required in these cases. The number of postal votes received after the close of poll and too late to be counted was 16 (as at midday Monday 10 May).

5.8 A total of 324 proxy votes were granted (including 2 emergency proxies). This compared with 95 in the 2009 combined European and county elections.

6.0 Polling Stations

6.1 36 polling stations were opened between the hours of 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m. on the 6 May at 35 different venues. A total of 119 people were employed for the day to staff the stations.

6.2 One particular issue to be dealt with before the next election will be the recent loss on Sunday 9 May of St. Andrew's Church Hall, Seaside, which was burnt down. The hall served as a polling station for electors in the SAC polling district of St Anthony's Ward.

7.0 Counting Arrangements

7.1 About 90 staff were engaged for the purposes of counting the votes and otherwise supervise and assist on the Thursday evening/early Friday morning. The count commenced at 10.00 p.m. on the 6 May. In addition, other Council staff assisted, including Strategy and Democracy staff, Town Hall reception and support staff, Press Office and I.T. staff and members of the Council's Corporate Management Team. The first stage of the Count was to verify the numbers of ballot papers to check the numbers of ballots found in boxes against the numbers of ballots issued to voters in polling stations. This task was completed shortly after midnight at 12.08am.

7.2 The next stage of the count was to sort between the candidates and count the votes for each. A provisional result figure was available at 2.20am after which election agents were consulted and given the opportunity of asking for a recount. No request was made and a move to have the result formally declared was put in hand. As a "borough" constituency, the declaration was made at 2.40am on Friday 7 May by the Mayor in his capacity as Returning Officer.

8.0 Joint purchasing arrangements

8.1 Eastbourne Electoral Services has joined with their counterparts in the other East Sussex Councils to jointly procure their election printing and stationery requirements in order to achieve greater economies of scale and improved discounts. As part of this collaborative work, a single county-wide contract was let for the printing of ballot papers, poll cards and postal votes. This contract will also cover future elections. Given the very small number of contractors nationally who have the capability of delivering this type of work within the very tight timescales required it was considered important that we secure the services of a reliable company on a longer term basis.

9.0 Debriefing

9.1 As is now the usual practice, party election agents have already been invited to a debrief meeting on 11 June with the objective of improving upon the arrangements for future years.

- 9.2 The Electoral Commission have invited Electoral Administrators in the South East to attend a feedback meeting on Tuesday 18 May. We will be represented by colleagues from Wealden and Rother.

10.0 Conclusion

- 10.1 I would like to record my thanks to everyone who contributed to the election. As election day itself went so smoothly it could be easy to underestimate the amount of work that went into making it a success and noting the many months of planning, helping people to register and dealing with thousands of postal votes leading up to the big day. I am grateful to everyone who worked a long hard day on polling day with such enthusiasm and professionalism. Party agents commented to me that they wanted to give credit where it was due, not only on how well organised the whole process was, but also that staff were good humoured, helpful and always willing to chat. The confidence they gave them helped the count itself to progress smoothly and with a great deal of consensus. This was my first election as Acting Returning Officer and I am delighted the involvement of all concerned ensured that it went incredibly well.

Robert Cottrill
Acting Returning Officer and Chief Executive

Background Papers:

Previous years' "Returning Officer's" reports can be found at:

2009:

<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/council/?category=8027>

2007:

<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/council/?category=635>

2006:

<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/council/?category=438>

2005:

<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/council/?category=198>

(der\P:council\10.05.26\returning officer report)

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION
EASTBOURNE BOROUGH CONSTITUENCY
6 MAY 2010 – RESULT OF POLL

I, the undersigned, being the Returning Officer at the Election of a Member to serve in Parliament for the Eastbourne Borough Constituency held on 6 May 2010, hereby give notice that the total number of votes recorded for each candidate at the election was as follows:

Name of Candidate	Description	Number of Votes
Michael Richard BALDRY	Independent	101
David Charles (Dave) BRINSON	The Labour Party Candidate	2,497
Keith Vernon GELL	Independent	74
Stephen Anthony Christopher LLOYD	Liberal Democrats	24,658
Roger Antony NEEDHAM	United Kingdom Independence Party	1,305
Colin POULTER	British National Party	939
Stephen Sai Hung SHING	Independent	1,327
Nigel Christopher WATERSON	The Conservative Party Candidate	21,223

And that the under-mentioned person has been duly elected to serve as the Member of Parliament for the said Constituency:

Stephen Anthony Christopher **LLOYD**

Also, that the number of ballot papers rejected and not counted by me at this election was as follows:

Reason for rejection	Number rejected
Want of official mark	Nil
Voting for more than one candidate	28
Writing of mark by which the voter could be identified	3
Unmarked or void for uncertainty	42
Total:	73

Signed: Gregory John Michael Szanto
Returning Officer

Dated this 7th day of May 2010