Transparency, Secrecy, Cost, Turnout

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Transparency (of the system)

- We have previously outlined our concerns about the transparency of e-counting for candidates, agents and other observers at the count venues. **These same concerns remain**… The progress of the count collation process was not clear and transparent for candidates, agents and observers to fully understand the progress of the count… **All of these issues severely affected perceptions of transparency and had the potential to seriously undermine confidence in the system. (**The UK Electoral Commission, The May 2016 Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections, 2016)

- "In a system with absolutely no accountability, claiming that votes were not changed and outcomes were not affected is j**ust as credible as saying that they were**." (The New Yorker, *Trump, Election Hacking, and the Georgia Governor's Race,* 2018)

Secrecy (of the ballot)

- The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and **shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures**. (Article 21 (3), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* 1948)

- "In the case of postal voting, eligibility to vote can be checked by comparing the physical signature on the registration form with the one on the postal voting slip. **It is difficult to envisage how such a check could be carried out in the case of Internet and telephone voting ...**The most common method of authentication in Internet and telephone voting is by means of one or more codes. These suffer from the risk of being stolen or guessed, **making it possible for someone other than the elector to vote and thus excluding the elector**" (Electoral Process Advisory Commission, *Voting with Confidence*, 2007)

There are a number of different offences that come under the term 'electoral fraud... Offences include:

'**undue influence**' (also referred to as intimidation) where a person directly or indirectly makes use of, or threatens to make use of, force, violence or restraint in order to induce or compel any voter to vote a certain way or refrain from voting. '

Bribery' is where a person directly or indirectly offers any reward to induce any voter to vote a certain way or refrain from voting.

'**Personation**' is where an individual votes as someone else; that can be at a polling station, by post or pretending to be someone's proxy voter. (Electoral Commission,2018)

Cost: UK elections since 2010

"**Electronic voting does not reduce costs in the short or medium term and may not even reduce costs in the long term**. The set-up / development costs of electronic voting are likely to be very high. There will also be high maintenance costs as well as expense in training polling staff. " (Scottish Constitution and Cabinet Directorate, *Electoral Reform Consultation Analysis*, 2018)
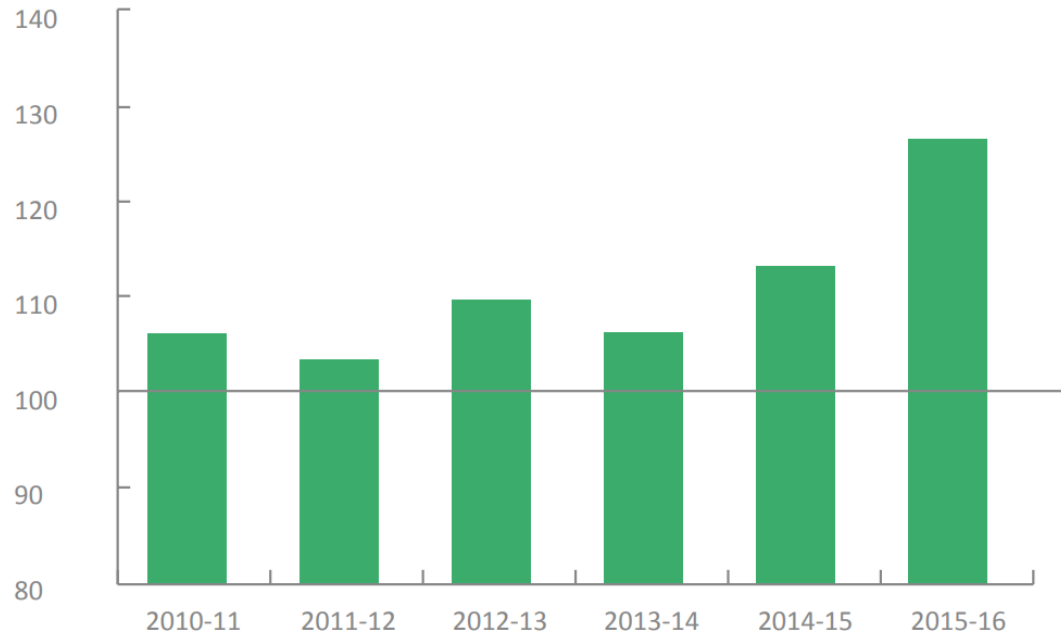
"I have to admit that **I am sceptical as to whether internet voting will save money** ... because it would be essential to maintain existing services. " (Dr Toby James, University of East Anglia)

"**As machines age, essential parts like memory cards and touch screens fail.** (*The Guardian, WannaCry attacks prompt Microsoft to release Windows updates, 2017*)

Figure 3: Proportion of budgets spent, 2010/11 - 2015/16

(Dr Toby James and Tyrone Jervier, *The Cost of Elections*, 2017)

Classic or premium…

Classic Voting Machine

Premium Voting Machine

Turnout

- "We find that in previous elections, the trial municipalities have had somewhat lower turnout levels than the county as a whole. That remains the case in the 2011 elections… **the aggregate-level numbers suggest that the trial had no effect on turnout**."

- "When there are differences between internet- and paper-voters, we find that **those who are especially likely to vote online do not have higher turnout in the trial municipalities than in the country as a whole**."

- "We find that 89 per cent of internet-voters respond that they would have voted even in the absence of the online voting-option. The remaining 11 per cent claim that they would not have cast a vote if they could not do so on the internet. **We argue that this result overestimates the share of internet-voters who would not have voted if there was no trial**."

Taken from the Norwegian Institute for Social Research (ISF)
report 'Evaluation of E-voting 2011', (2012).

If it ain't broke…

An election in the UK shares many of the features of a village fête. People gather in their local village hall or primary school and are met by volunteers puffed up with civic pride… The politicians wear retro rosettes, and tears are shed in the great climax of civic participation, when the teller, often in ceremonial garb, announces the count. **Part of the reason for the fusty process and archaic technology, in the era of big data and instant AI-driven feedback is ritual, and part of it is about trust. The two go together, and they are both important factors in the social construction of legitimacy**.

(Tambini, D*., Social Media Power and Election Legitimacy*, 2018)

Conclusions:

- **Threat to public understanding and 'buy in'**

- **Risk to the principle of the secret ballot**

- **Costly and unwarranted infrastructure**

- **No evidence of increased turnout**