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REQUEST

I am applying for the following details under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please can you tell me:

How many postal votes were cast in each local and national election in the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013? Please break the results down by year and election.

How many postal votes were rejected and therefore not considered in the final results because of irregularities in the way they were completed suggesting possible fraud?

I would like the numbers broken down for each year 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, please. I would like information covering local and national elections, also broken down.

How many postal votes were found to have been applied for from buildings which were not genuine residences, eg on checking the addresses were discovered to be empty, derelict or not residential properties?

I would like the numbers broken down for each year 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 and covering both local and national elections expressed separately, please.

How many postal votes were rejected because they were duplicates, eg someone had apparently applied for more than one vote in their name? Again, please send the figures broken down by year and election as above from 2010 to 2013 inclusive. Please state how many duplicates were identified for each applicant where this was an issue.

How many cases were referred to the Police for further investigation? I would like figures for each year from 2010 to 2013 broken down by calendar year including both local and national elections separately. Please state the allegation in each case.

RESPONSE

Further to the request for information e-mailed to this authority on 23 January 2014, whilst the Returning Officer (RO) is not considered a public authority and therefore not subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, (http://ico.org.uk/for_organisations/sector_guides/~media/documents/library/Freedom_of_Information/Detailed_specialist_guides/definition_document_local_authorities.ashx), in the interests of transparency, we are pleased to provide the following information.

Details relating to the number of postal votes received in respect of all major scheduled elections, (local elections in May 2011 excepted), is already publicly available via the Electoral Commission's website (<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-data>) and links to the relevant documents are as set out below;

County Council local elections – May 2013 (County of Essex, Tendring District Council, 8 County Divisions)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/data/assets/excel_doc/0018/163143/May-2013-electoral-data-spreadsheet-WEB.xls

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections – November 2012 (Tendring)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0004/154471/PCC-2012-electoral-data-WEB.xlsx

UK Parliamentary voting system (UKPVS) referendum – May 2011 (Tendring Counting Area, Clacton and Harwich and Essex North Constituencies)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0019/141274/PVS-referendum-postal-and-admin-data-WEB.xls

UK Parliamentary general election – May 2010 (Clacton and Harwich and Essex North Constituencies)

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/excel_doc/0004/105727/GE2010-turnout-admin-web.xls

Although the spreadsheets listed above contain the data you seek in relation to the total number of postal votes and the number of rejected postal votes, you will see that it is not possible to determine from the document whether an individual vote with mismatched personal identifiers was rejected due to the voter's error or attempted fraud.

Please note that postal vote applications are only processed from residential properties where the elector has already been considered eligible to be registered at that address. Reviews of potential duplicated registrations are undertaken periodically throughout the year to minimise electors registering within the electoral area more than once and registration forms provide for previous address information to assist with the deletion of electors from their former addresses. Processes are in place to review multiple applications for residents at one address, including houses in multiple occupation and in those instances where a large proportion are rejected due to failed verification of personal identifiers, these would be reviewed at the Returning Officer's request and anything suspicious duly reported to our Special Point of Contact (SPOC).

During the period in question, I can confirm that no cases of suspected fraud were referred to our SPOC for further investigation.