SUBMISSION FROM WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

I refer to your e-mail to Joyce White, Chief Executive, dated 29 January 2013 seeking the views of this local authority on various matters relating to the Scottish Local Elections held in May 2012.

West Dunbartonshire Council wishes to comment on the issue of postal and proxy voting and in particular the rules relating to the rejection of postal votes.

**Refresh of Signatures**

This Council supports the Electoral Commission’s proposal that EROs should be allowed to request a refreshed identifying signature from a postal voter. There is clear local evidence that the signatures of some postal voters have changed/deteriorated significantly over time and therefore a refreshed signature would reduce the risk of the postal vote being rejected at subsequent elections. Furthermore, where the age of an elector is clearly a factor and the signature is unlikely to improve it may be helpful for the ERO to provide advice on applying for a waiver.

**Mismatch of forms**

This Council supports the view that Returning Officer’s should have discretion to accept a post voting statement where it is clear that the form has been accidentally completed by another person living within the same household. The Returning Officer would need to be confident that all identifiers provided were correct and that the only error related to a mismatch of the forms.

**Dates of Birth**

This Council supports the view that Returning Officer’s should have discretion to accept a date of birth which does not match, if they believe it to be a genuine voter error, e.g. where the date and month have been reversed.

**Proxy voting**

The Council supports the view that the emergency proxy voting provision should be extended to include those persons who are unexpectedly called away on business or military service or are unable to attend due to caring responsibilities or a recent bereavement.

George Hawthorn
Section Head, Democratic Services
West Dunbartonshire Council