

Councillor Jack Hopkins  
Leader of Lambeth Council  
Lambeth Town Hall  
1 Brixton Hill  
London  
SW2 1RW

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

We are writing to you following the disturbing reports from many non-UK EU citizens (hereafter referred to as EU citizens) that they were not able to vote in yesterday's European elections. We have strong reason to believe that Lambeth's EU citizens have faced unnecessary difficulties in exercising their right to vote, leading to the disenfranchisement of up to 10% of Lambeth's EU citizens. We ask you to carry out a review into Lambeth Council Electoral Services' handling of voter registration of EU citizens in our borough for the 2019 European elections.

#### Up to 2,000 EU citizens turned away at Lambeth polling stations

The Lambeth Liberal Democrats first flagged our concern that EU citizens in Lambeth would have difficulties voting in an article dated 13<sup>th</sup> May after it came to light that many EU citizens received UC1 forms from Lambeth Council by post on 8<sup>th</sup> May, the day after registration closed. Unfortunately, yesterday's events bore out our fears that many local EU citizens would be blocked from exercising their right to vote.

One EU citizen reported attending his polling station at The Cut, Waterloo, only to find that his name was crossed out. This is despite being told previously by council officials that his forms had been received and he would be eligible to vote. Officials at the polling station told him that 12 further cases of EU citizens attempting to vote and finding their names crossed out had taken place at that polling station alone, by 6.30pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

If 12 instances could take place by 6.30pm in one polling district, there is a strong possibility that as many as 2,000 EU citizens could have been turned away across Lambeth's 133 polling districts yesterday.

**We call on you to launch an urgent inquiry into the registration process to ascertain how many EU citizens were denied their right to vote in yesterday's elections.**

#### Catalogue of failures

The Lambeth Liberal Democrats received approximately 60 written and verbal reports of EU citizens struggling to vote due to the unnecessary bureaucracy of the process as well as significant levels of human error from Lambeth Council staff. We have provided assistance in these cases and, where relevant, referred them onwards to Lambeth Council electoral services or complaints line, and to the Electoral Commission.

We recognise that the two-stage voter registration process was out of Lambeth Council's hands. We support the 3 million in their complaint to the Electoral Commission for failing to simplify that process, and their call for a nationwide inquiry into this scandal.

However, many of the reports of EU citizens struggling to vote were down to errors made by Lambeth Council staff, and we ask you to take responsibility for investigating the scale of the problem in our borough.

Failures reported to us included:

- Lambeth council staff telling electors that they are eligible to vote in the European elections one week, and contradicting this information the following week once the registration deadline had passed.
- Electors who had been told by the council they were registered to vote in this election, finding their name crossed out on the register on polling day.
- Lambeth Council staff failing to inform EU citizens about the need to fill in a UC1 form when they called up or emailed to ask about their eligibility to vote.
- Lambeth Council failing to process forms that were sent back in time for the 7<sup>th</sup> May deadline.
- Lambeth Council staff telling EU citizens to approach their embassy/consulate in order to rectify the problem with their registration to vote in UK elections.
- Postal votes sent much later to EU citizens than to UK citizens, risking that ballots would either not be usable (where the elector was on holiday) or would arrive back with electoral services too late to be counted.

We are aware of at least one case in which Lambeth Council has admitted to “clerical errors” that almost denied an elector his vote. In that case, the elector was told over the phone on 7<sup>th</sup> May that he would be able to vote as he submitted his form the day before. But when he didn’t receive a polling card, he called again only to be told that his form could not be found.

After a three-day battle, many phone calls and at least two written complaints, he was sent an emergency letter to allow him to vote in Thursday’s election. The returning officer informed him that, following the complaint, he had listened to the recorded phone calls, which demonstrated that “unclear” advice had been given.

#### EU citizens deserve answers

The false information given to electors by Lambeth Council employees gives rise to a set of questions, to which EU citizens in this borough deserve answers. We set out these questions below, and ask you to launch an urgent inquiry to answer these questions.

Any inquiry should include review of all recorded phone calls and emails exchanged with EU citizens regarding their registration to vote, to identify where false or misleading information was given that led to an elector being denied their right to vote. It should also identify where Lambeth Council electoral services staff failed against the standards set out in the Electoral Commission’s Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers, which oblige officers to maintain “accurate and complete registers”.

1. How many EU citizens successfully registered to vote using the UC1 form in Lambeth for the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 European elections?
2. How many EU citizens’ names were crossed out on the Lambeth Borough electoral register for the 2019 European Elections?
3. How many complaints has Lambeth received regarding the registration of EU citizens for the 2019 European Parliament elections?
4. How many complaints resulted in the Returning Officer instructing the presiding officer of any polling station in Lambeth to allow an EU citizen to vote even though their name had been crossed off the register?

5. What training was given to Lambeth Council electoral services employees regarding the process for EU citizens to register to vote in the European elections 2019? When was this training provided and to how many staff?
6. What training was provided to employees who would be dealing with public enquiries over the phone and email, and were they told that they should proactively inform EU citizens of the need to fill in a UC1 form?
7. How many UC1 forms did Lambeth Council receive after the 7<sup>th</sup> May deadline from EU citizens wishing to register to vote?

The Liberal Democrats believe that EU citizens living in the UK make a huge positive contribution to our society, communities and economy, and we believe they should have an equal voice in all UK elections. EU citizens were not allowed to vote in the 2016 referendum, and many saw the European elections as their chance to show their support for the UK remaining in the EU by voting for pro-Remain parties like the Liberal Democrats. Yesterday, many were denied their rights and their voice.

Lambeth Labour has in the past stated its commitment to the rights of European citizens and to a People's Vote with the option to remain in the EU, so we trust that you will take this matter as seriously as we do. We look forward to your timely response.

Yours Sincerely,

**Helen Thompson**

Liberal Democrat PPC  
for Streatham Constituency

**Sarah Lewis**

Liberal Democrat PPC  
for Vauxhall Constituency

**Ade Fatukasi**

Liberal Democrat PPC  
for Dulwich & West Norwood