



Norfolk's police and crime commissioner backs report on election mistakes

By DAN GRIMMER [mailto:dan.grimmer@archant.co.uk] Wednesday, March 20, 2013

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Norfolk's police and crime commissioner has welcomed a report which concedes mistakes were made in the inaugural elections for the role.

Stephen Bett, *pictured*, who quit the Conservatives to stand as an independent candidate in last November's elections, said the Electoral Commission's report was "candid and accurate" and highlighted many concerns he had previously raised.

Turnout nationally was just 15.1pc, with Norfolk a touch below that on 15pc.

According to the report, the most common reasons for people not voting in the first police and crime commissioner election was a lack of awareness and understanding about the election, not knowing who the candidates were or where to find information about them.

The government did not provide money for a mail-shot informing voters of the candidates and the Electoral Commission report recommends that a booklet of candidates is sent to every home for the next elections in 2016.

Mr Bett said: "Norfolk is the fifth largest county in England – it's a vast geographical area to canvass.

"My small campaign team and I worked hard to get out and speak to as many people in as many parts of the county as possible, but it was a mammoth task.

"In other types of election the government would facilitate mailshots or booklets being sent out to households including candidates' details – we were on our own.

"Whilst face-to-face contact is preferable, this would have helped us reach out to more people." Jenny Watson, chairman of the Electoral Commission, in recommending the government to make clear at the time of introducing legislation how they will ensure voters have access to information about candidates, said: "It's not enough to think that simply holding an election will inspire participation.

"That's why at the 2016 PCC elections a candidate information booklet must be sent to every household."

Mr Bett added: "The role of PCC is an important one. We have huge decisions to make on behalf of the areas we serve.

"The next PCC elections are scheduled for May 2016, and I hope the government will take on board the recommendations made in this report by the Electoral Commission and take steps to ensure the public is aware, engaged and empowered to make an informed decision on who they want to represent them as police and crime commissioner.
