

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO:	COUNCIL		
DATE:	27 JANUARY 2009	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS		
SPONSORING COUNCILLOR SERVICE:	CLLR STEVENS CHIEF EXECUTIVES	PANEL:	CCEA WARDS: ALL
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Further to Minute 38 of the Council meeting on 14 October 2008, this report sets out the recommendations made to Council on national identity cards by the Corporate, Community and External Affairs (CCEA) Scrutiny Panel held on 2 December 2008.
- 1.2 The CCEA Scrutiny Panel has recommended to Council that it authorise the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary stating Reading Borough Council's opposition to ID cards and that the Council should take no part in a pilot Identity Card Scheme.
- 1.3 The CCEA Scrutiny Panel has decided to form a Working Party of Panel Members to further investigate the full implications of Identity Cards for Council services.
- 1.4 The report submitted to the CCEA Panel on 2 December 2008 is attached at Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Council authorise the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary stating that the Council:
 - was opposed to the introduction of National Identity Cards;
 - did not believe that National Identity Cards would be effective against terrorism;
 - considered the cost of the scheme to be an unjustifiable waste of money;
 - had concerns over the confidentiality of information held by government;

- had no confidence in the ability of the public sector IT projects to implement successfully a secure Identity Card Scheme;

2.2 That the Council should not take part in a pilot Identity Card scheme.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Reading Borough Council does not currently have a position on identity cards.

3.2 The Home Office has stated that identity cards will provide an easy and secure way for legal UK residents to prove who they are when they apply for services with private businesses, or for government benefits.

4. OUTCOME OF CCEA SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 Council, on 14 October 2008, considered a motion moved by Councillor Epps and seconded by Councillor Bayes in the following terms:

“This Council notes:

- That, although the Government has reported that the National Identity Scheme will cost £93 per person, the London School of Economics estimated the cost of cards could be as high as £20 billion - three times Government estimates. The LSE put the lowest cost to each individual at £170.
- The councillor briefing document published by No2ID which states: “With an estimated 80% of citizen contact with the state occurring through local authorities, your council will be at the forefront of the implementation and use of ID cards and the NIR”.
- The interrogation centre opened on King's Road by the Home Office in 2007.

This Council believes:

- That the proposed scheme will impose costs on the Council itself in terms of ensuring compatibility of operations.
- That technological constraints and recent events have shown lack of trust by the people in the Government's ability and competence with regards to keeping personal data safe.
- That taking the above into account makes the cost of the Identity System not only unfeasible, but such a system would be counterproductive in terms of protecting our residents.

This Council resolves and mandates the Executive:

- To take no part in any pilot scheme or feasibility work in relation to the introduction of the National Identity cards, based upon current Government proposals for such a scheme, or unless specifically required to by law.

- To make it a policy of the Council to ensure that National Identity cards will not be required to access Council services or benefits unless specifically required to do so by law.
- To oppose the introduction of National Identity cards, with particular reference to the National Identity Register and write to the Home Secretary to inform her of Council policy.
- To take no part in the National Identity Register unless required to do so by law and protect our residents' data to the best of our ability.
- To adamantly oppose plans forcing students, particularly those at the University of Reading and Thames Valley University, to register for the National ID scheme in order to have access to governmental student financial help.
- To affiliate with and support the cross-party No2ID campaign."

4.2 The Council resolved as follows:

"This Council notes the motion and requests that it be referred to the CCEA Scrutiny Panel for further consideration along with a report from the Chief Executive providing further information to enable the Authority to assess the implications for the future provision of public services and for citizens of Reading of a wider use of National Identity Cards and that the Scrutiny Panel make recommendations to full Council."

4.3 A report providing further information of the National Identity Scheme, and a balanced overview of the implications of identity cards for the future provision of services and for the citizens of Reading was presented at CCEA Scrutiny Panel on 2 December 2008. This is attached as Appendix A.

4.4 The CCEA Scrutiny Panel recommendations back to Council are set out in 2.1 above.

4.5 The CCEA Scrutiny Panel also agreed that a Working Party of Party Members from the Panel would be formed. This Working Party will examine in greater detail and with support from officers, the full implications of Identity Cards for Council services, staff and financial resources, and report back to the Panel by the end of the Municipal Year.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The possible negative implications of identity cards relate to the equality and social inclusion themes within the council.

5.2 Efficiency gains from the adoption of the identity card scheme would contribute towards the 'Improving the way we work' priority within the council.

5.3 The potential security risk of personal information stored upon identity cards relates to the council's 'Safer and Stronger Communities' theme.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The legal implications of a National Identity Scheme will become clear if and when such a scheme is implemented.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There will be a cost to taking part in any pilot scheme and from implementing the full scheme. We are not in a position to assess these costs at present.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Central Office of Information, National Identity Tracking Research, Wave 3: February 2008. <http://www.ips.gov.uk/identity/press-2008-03-06.asp>

9.2 No2ID website: www.no2id.net

9.3 Several news articles from news.bbc.co.uk:

Analysis: The First ID Cards

People 'can't wait for ID cards'

ID card fingerprint errors fear

Airport workers' ID card 'insult'

Foreign national ID card unveiled

ID card 'could threaten privacy'

Q&A: ID cards

9.4 11.4 Identity and Passport Service Website: www.ips.gov.uk

10. APPENDICES

10.1 National Identity Card Report to CCEA Scrutiny Panel, 2 December 2008.