

## My Election – a hit with voters in Swindon

On 4<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the electors of Swindon, and anyone else who cared to log on to [www.myelection.co.uk.swindon](http://www.myelection.co.uk.swindon), were able to see the results of the 2006 local elections in Swindon published live on the web as they were declared. This was made possible by MyElection Swindon, an online election resource where voters were also able to find out information about candidates, polling station locations and other relevant election details. One of the features of the site was an interactive forum, where voters were able to have their say on the election process.



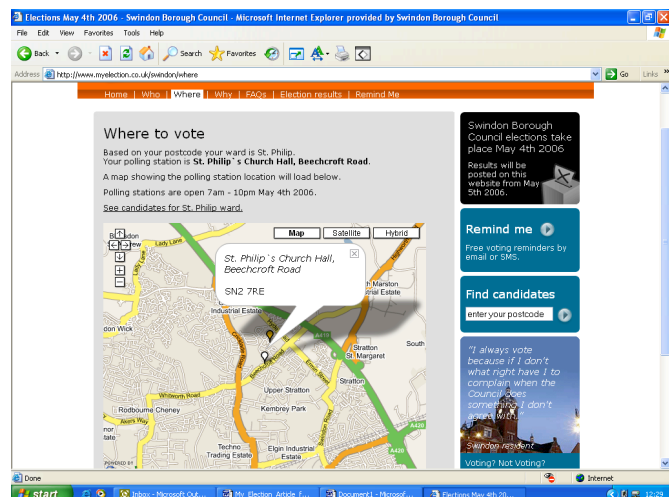
The feedback and forum comments from the website has revealed a public desire for more detailed online candidate information. 70% of people who responded to the on-line survey also felt that there is a need for supplementary methods of voting such as voting using the internet, interactive TV or telephone.

The MyElection website was designed to make voting easy by being a one stop shop for election information. The

website was implemented to increase voter turnout and to give voters election information efficiently, providing answers to common voting queries such as finding out how to vote by proxy and where they were able to vote.

One of the websites features was a sophisticated postcode finder system which allowed the user to discover which ward they live in and where their polling station was. By entering their postcode, voters were shown a map that indicated the location of their polling station in relation to their registered address. The website also gave lists of candidates by wards together with their photographs.

MyElection Swindon also contained a link to the Election Alarm Clock, the election reminder service which reminded subscribers to vote on polling day.



The user feedback from MyElection was very encouraging, with over 90% of people saying that they found the website easy to use and 74% of people finding the site useful. One of the main complaints people had about the site was that they could not directly access more information about the candidates. Many users felt that they had not received enough information through traditional sources or that the information they had was biased. On line candidate statements had been provided in 2003 with the internet voting pilot in Swindon and this was a very popular feature of the internet voting site with electors. This was provided as part of the pilot scheme and was specifically provided for in the statutory order for the pilot scheme. As this website was not provided as part of a pilot scheme it was not possible to provide this facility at this election.

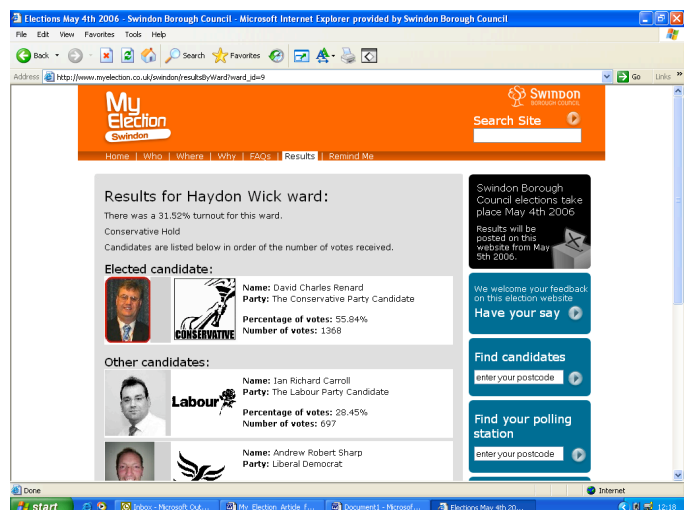
One of the comments left on the site expressed the frustration the electors felt: “Since I haven't received any literature through the door as in previous elections, I went on the site hoping to find some information about the candidates - not just their names and party allegiance. I was disappointed and still don't know who to vote for - who is going to do what for me?”

However, the feedback also showed that people were glad to have the website as an information resource. One user described the site as “helpful and informative”, adding that “I did not know who the candidates were until I went into your website”. Another found it “very convenient”.

The website received almost 4,000 hits and the provision of information in one place online saved the council time and money as it significantly reduced the number of querying phone calls both before and after the election.

We made sure that every household was aware of the website and what they would be able to find there. The number of hits on the results pages proved what a popular feature this was.

I was very pleased with the website and what was produced in the time available was amazing. It was very simple to use and easy to update. The interactive wireless link for posting results enabled these to be available on the website as they were being declared in the count hall. Turnout increased by 2% and turnout levels have returned to the level that they were at ten years ago after previously slumping by 18% in five years. All the piloting work we have done since 2000 appears to have stopped the decline and



is paying off with a steady year on year increase in turnout. All the feedback we have had about the website has been positive. We have signed up to provide this facility for two years and it will be bigger and better next year.

The website is still live – [www.myelection.co.uk/swindon](http://www.myelection.co.uk/swindon) - please go and have a look at it. Any comments would be gratefully received.

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