

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 17 th October 2022
Report Subject	Elections Act 2022 – Voter Identification (Voter ID) Update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Elections Act 2022 makes a number of changes to the elections process at UK Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. This does not apply to Flintshire County Council, Town and Community or Senedd elections.

Some of the changes include the requirement that voters produce an approved form of photo ID at the polling station, changes to absent voting rules, EU citizens' voting rights and 'votes for life' for overseas electors.

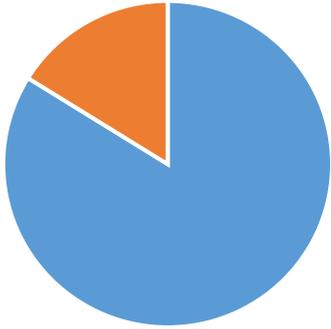
This report provides an update on the voter identification (ID) process and support provided to voters who do not have an acceptable form of photo ID. It also outlines work undertaken to promote Voter ID and planned communications ahead of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections scheduled for Thursday 2nd May 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Cabinet notes the update on Voter ID.
2	That Cabinet supports the work undertaken and planned communications to promote Voter ID.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ELECTIONS ACT 2022 – VOTER IDENTIFICATION (VOTER ID) UPDATE
1.01	<p>Background</p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 was granted Royal Assent and passed into law on 28th April 2022.</p> <p>The main changes are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The requirement that voters produce an approved form of photo ID at the polling station before they can be issued with a ballot paper.• Returning Officers will be responsible for improving support in polling stations for people with a wide range of disabilities.• Electors will be able to apply online for an absent vote, with both online and paper applications requiring the applicant’s identity to be verified. Electors will be required to reapply every three years for a postal vote.• Electors will only be allowed to act as proxy for up to four people, of which no more than two can be ‘domestic electors’ and political parties/campaigners will be banned from handling postal votes.• For the Police and Crime Commissioner elections (2nd May 2024) EU citizens will no longer automatically be entitled to register to vote and stand for election and the voting method will move to the “first past the post” system.• The 15-year limit on overseas electors right to vote in Parliamentary elections will be removed and will be able to register in respect of their last UK address. <p>These changes have been made through secondary legislation over the last year and further changes will be made during the Autumn/Winter 2023/24.</p>
1.02	<p>Voter Identification (Voter ID)</p> <p>Since 16th January 2023 registered electors have been able to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate (VAC), which can be used instead of photo ID. Information has been provided on the Councils website on the accepted forms of photo ID that can be used when voting at a polling station. It also explains how to apply for a VAC, if you don't have an accepted form of photo ID.</p>

	<p>Electors can apply online on a gov.uk website or by filling out a paper application form. They can also get help taking and uploading a photograph at one of the Flintshire Connects offices. All staff have been provided with information on the new requirement.</p>				
1.03	<p>Processing VAC applications</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the electoral services team to process all applications received. This work has been undertaken using existing resources. Plans will be put in place for extra resources when the volume of applications increase in the lead up to the Police and Crime Commissioner and UK Parliamentary elections.</p>				
1.04	<p>Volume of applications</p> <p>As at week ending 28th July a total of 99 VAC applications have been received. A total of 16 applications have been rejected as they did not provide a suitable photograph and re-submit within 28 days, despite being sent a reminder in accordance with regulations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total number of VAC applications received</p>  <table border="1" data-bbox="608 1384 1098 1458"> <tr> <td>■</td> <td>Total number of VAC applications accepted (83)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>■</td> <td>Total number of VAC applications rejected (16)</td> </tr> </table>	■	Total number of VAC applications accepted (83)	■	Total number of VAC applications rejected (16)
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1.05	<p>Communications Plan</p> <p>The annual canvass of properties commenced in July and over the summer months information on Voter ID has been sent to residents. Information has been included in email canvass communications to over 32,000 properties. Properties that have been sent a paper communication have also received a leaflet regarding Voter ID. Therefore, over 71,000 properties in Flintshire have been sent direct information about Voter ID.</p> <p>Over the coming months further promotion on Voter ID will commence. The Council's digital channels will be used to remind electors of the requirements of Voter ID and how to apply for a VAC. Information will also be sent to under-represented groups. It is planned to include a leaflet with the Council Tax bills in March next year. The Electoral Commission will run</p>				

	<p>a media campaign in the new year and in the run up to the Police and Crime Commissioner election.</p> <p>Electors will also receive a poll card which will include information regarding Voter ID which is a new requirement.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
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2.01	<p>Revenue: there are no implications for the approved revenue budget for this service as a grant payment has been received to cover the costs of this new burden from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.</p> <p>Human Resources: the service has undertaken this work using existing resources, but extra resources will be required closer to the Police and Crime Commissioner election to cope with the increased volume of applications and for the next UK Parliamentary election.</p>
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3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
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3.01	<p>As an Act of the UK Parliament this legislation does not include an assessment of how it meets the needs of future generations. However, our own assessment indicates that the provision of voter ID has the potential to disenfranchise some sections of society.</p>
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4.01	None.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	None.
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	<p>Voter ID at the May 2023 local elections in England: interim analysis https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-id-may-2023-local-elections-england-interim-analysis</p> <p>Report to Flintshire Council – Tuesday 13th December 2022</p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020</p>
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7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Lynn Phillips – Team Leader Democratic Services Telephone: 01352 702329 E-mail: lyn.phillips@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Act: a Bill that has been approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and been given Royal Assent by the Monarch.