

Report To:	COUNCIL
Date:	2 MARCH 2023
Heading:	ELECTIONS ACT 2022 – VOTER AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES
Executive Lead Member:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
Ward/s:	NOT APPLICABLE
Key Decision:	NOT APPLICABLE
Subject to Call-In:	NOT APPLICABLE

Purpose of Report

To update the Council in respect of:

- The new requirement for voters to take eligible photographic identification to polling stations at future elections to be able to vote;
- The process for obtaining Voter Authority Certificates by voters who do not have eligible photographic identification; and
- To authorise nominated officers to act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for the purposes of signing Temporary Voter Authority Certificates.

Recommendation(s)

Council is asked to:

- 1. Note the new legal requirement introduced as part of the Elections Act 2022 for voters to produce photographic identification at polling stations in order to vote at future elections; and**
- 2. Note the process for obtaining Voter Authority Certificates;**
- 3. Authorise the following to act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for the purposes of signing Temporary Voter Authority Certificates, in addition to the Electoral Registration Officer (Ruth Dennis):**
 - **Theresa Hodgkinson, Chief Executive**
 - **Michael Joy, Assistant Director – Democracy**
 - **Ian Dobson, Electoral Services (AEA) Consultant (for elections in May 2023)**
 - **Carla Benedetti, Electoral Services Officer**
 - **Louise Ellis, Assistant Director – Legal**

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

To ensure the Council is aware of new legal arrangements regarding the requirement for voters to produce eligible photographic identification at polling stations for future elections in order to be able to vote.

To ensure the Council is aware of the process for voters who do not have eligible photographic identification to apply for Voter Authority Certificates.

To ensure that there are sufficient officers nominated to sign and authorise Temporary Voter Authority Certificates to deal with potentially significant numbers of applications and in the absence / unavailability of the Electoral Registration Officer. The Regulations require security measures to be in place to ensure the authenticity of Temporary Voter Authority Certificates, “wet signatures” for the Certificates is one such measure.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternatives were considered - It would not be advisable for the Electoral Registration Officer to be the only officer authorised to sign Temporary Voter Authority Certificates as this would not be workable in the event of large numbers of applications being received in a short space of time which need processing without delay.

Detailed Information

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photographic identification to vote at polling stations.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 it will also apply to UK General elections.

Accepted forms of photo ID

The following is a list of accepted forms of photo ID when voting at a polling station:

International travel

- Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country

Driving and Parking

- Photographic driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (this includes a provisional driving licence)
- A Blue Badge

Local travel

- Older Person's Bus Pass
- Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- Oyster 60+ Card
- Freedom Pass
- Scottish National Entitlement Card
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- War Disablement SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland

Proof of age

- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)

Other government issued documents

- Biometric immigration document
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- National identity card issued by an EEA state
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland
- Voter Authority Certificate (see further information below)
- Anonymous Elector's Document (see further information below)

Only **one** form of photo ID is needed. It needs to be the original version and not a photocopy.

A voter can still use photo ID if it is out of date, as long as it still looks like them.

The name on the ID should be the same name as appears on the Register of Electors.

If the voter is registered to vote anonymously and they want to vote in person, the voter will need to apply for an **Anonymous Elector's Document**.

A voter does not need photo ID to vote by post.

Voter Authority Certificate

A voter can apply for a **free** voter ID document, known as a **Voter Authority Certificate**, if:

- they don't have an accepted form of photo ID
- they are not sure whether their photo ID still looks like them

- they are worried about using an existing form of ID for any other reason, such as the use of a gender marker

The voter must be registered to vote before applying for a Voter Authority Certificate.

The Electoral Commission are undertaking a national media campaign to raise awareness with voters about the process for applying for a Voter Authority Certificate. The Council will continue its awareness campaign as well.

A voter can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate:

- online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate>
- by post by filling out a paper application form and sending this to the Council.
- in person at the Council.

When applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, the voter will need to provide:

- name - apply using the same name that was used to register to vote.
- address
- date of birth
- National Insurance number - If a voter doesn't know their National Insurance number, or doesn't have one, they will need to provide other forms of proof of identity, such as a birth certificate, bank statement and a utility bill. If a voter doesn't have any other accepted proof of identity, they can ask someone to confirm their identity this is known as an attestation.
- Photograph - the requirements for the photo are similar to the requirements for a passport photo. If a voter needs help taking a photo, then the Council will be able to help with this.

Voter Authority Certificates do not have an expiration date, but it is recommended that you renew your certificate after 10 years.

Temporary Voter Authority Certificates

The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate for the local elections in England on 4 May 2023 is **5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023**.

After 25 April a voter can still apply for a **Temporary Voter Authority Certificate** to be able to vote on 4 May; the Temporary Voter Authority Certificate will only be valid on the date of the specific election. It must be collected by the applicant; it cannot be sent via post.

A Temporary Voter Authority Certificate must include:

- the elector's full name
- the date of issue
- the name of the local authority by which the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) was appointed
- an appropriate identifier

- the date for which the Temporary Voter Authority Certificate is valid
- the applicant's photograph
- the ERO's signature

In accordance with Electoral Commission (EC) guidance, the ERO's signature can be provided by a deputy and should be a wet ink signature. The EC acknowledges that the Council may need to consider appointing additional deputy ERO's with the power to sign temporary Voter Authority Certificates. Ruth Dennis, Executive Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) was nominated to act as ERO in 2019. The Council is therefore recommended to authorise the following to act as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for the purposes of signing Temporary Voter Authority Certificates:

- Theresa Hodgkinson, Chief Executive
- Michael Joy, Assistant Director – Democracy
- Ian Dobson, Electoral Services (AEA) Consultant (for elections in May 2023)
- Carla Benedetti, Electoral Services Officer
- Louise Ellis, Assistant Director - Legal

Implications

Corporate Plan:

Enable thriving, prosperous and self-sufficient communities where people shape their own futures. Ensure effective community leadership, through good governance, transparency, accountability and appropriate behaviours.

Legal:

The report outlines the new requirements for Voter ID brought into force by the Elections Act 2022 and related Regulations and Electoral Commission guidance. [RLD 21/02/2023]

Finance: [PH 21/02/2023].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	Additional staffing costs will be funded from the Elections Reserve. Additional non-staff costs will be funded from any specific Government funding allocated to implement the new requirements of the Act or from the Elections Reserve.
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
There is uncertainty regarding the number of Voter Authority Certificates/Temporary Voter Authority Certificates the Council will be required to assist with and process in advance of the elections in May 2023. In the event of large number of applications, particularly for temporary certificates, in a short period of time, there will be pressure on the small team to process these.	Planning is in place to ensure resources are available. The recommendation to authorise additional signatories to Temporary Voter Authority Certificates will contribute to ensuring the Council is able to process large numbers in a short period of time.

Human Resources:

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no environmental/sustainability issues in relation to the recommendations in the report.

Equalities:

Voters can request online the Voter Authority Certificate instructions in large print, braille or easy read via the government portal.

The Council will provide support and assistance to any voter who needs help with completing Voter Authority Certificate applications (on the phone or face to face) including with taking photographs.

A voter will not need to provide their gender in order to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate and the certificate will not have a gender marker.

The Elections Act 2022 also introduces new accessibility requirements at polling stations but these are not covered in this report.

Other Implications:

None identified.

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable.

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable.

Background Papers

Not applicable.

Report Author and Contact Officer

Ruth Dennis
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE
MONITORING OFFICER
ruth.dennis@ashfield.gov.uk
01623 457009