

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting:	14 December 2022
Title of Report:	2022 Elections Act – Voter ID
Lead Member:	Councillor James Stoneman (Cabinet Member for Climate Change)
Lead Strategic Director:	Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive)
Author:	Glenda Favor-Ankersen
Contact Email:	glenda.favor-ankersen@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	VAC 2022
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

Inform members of the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the key points about the 2022 Elections Act, and Voter ID in particular.

To highlight the risks, actions and resources required for the effective implementation of the provisions of the Elections Act 2022 ('the Act').

Recommendations and Reasons

The Committee is asked to note the report.

The Returning Officer (RO) / Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to be kept updated by the Head of Electoral Services on all developments relating to the Elections Act 2022, in particular any impacts on the effective delivery of elections and the compilation and maintenance of the register.

The RO/ERO to keep senior council officers, including CMT, election agents, councillors and other interested parties appraised of any changes to the legislative environment governing elections and electoral registration.

The impact of any such changes to be quantified as far as possible, with resource and funding implications highlighted, as well as new and additional risks.

Alternative options considered and rejected

NA

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

We are collaborative

As a collaborative local authority we work to serve our residents and put the interests of the city and its communities at the heart of what we do. It is thus important that our electoral processes meet the needs of our residents.

We are democratic

Plymouth City Council prides itself in involving residents in its decision making process. A resident's ability to exercise their vote through our election processes is key to ensuring that this is a reality.

Corporate and Plymouth Plan

It is important to be mindful that changes to the electoral processes could impact on both the Corporate Plan and the Plymouth Plan.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The current ratio of polling station staff to electors recommended by the Electoral Commission is one presiding officer and three poll clerks for a polling station with between 2,000 and 2,500 electors voting in that polling station. Fewer poll clerks are needed for polling stations with smaller electorates.

It is likely that more poll clerks will be needed in the years immediately after the introduction of the provisions in the Elections Act, as electors become used to the new requirements. Greater support to POs will be needed, until this new provision is fully understood and adopted by electors as a matter of course.

Central government has indicated that new burdens will be funded up to 2024.

Financial Risks

Central government has committed to fund new burdens up to 2024. Information about the time taken to undertake various functions was used to develop their funding model. Any additional funding for a period of time will ultimately be combined with the Rates Support Grant.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Many of the key processes in electoral registration and running elections remain paper based – wherever there is a need for a wet ink signature, a paper form or document is needed. Voting continues to be based on the completion of paper ballot papers, and there is no indication from government of any intention to change this.

The introduction of individual electoral registration saw a significant reduction in the use of paper forms, as the applicant now submits their details online. However invitations to register are still printed and sent out to residents who are not yet registered. Absent vote applications need to be printed out, completed, signed and scanned – there is still a paper form in this process, even if it is not posted to the ERO.

During the annual canvass, Plymouth City Council Electoral Registration team sends email and texts using Gov.Notify before sending out paper copy of the canvass forms to non-responding residents. Telephone canvass is also done for the “personal contact” part of the canvass programme, before door knocking starts. This is not universal, but is an approach that Plymouth City has taken.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Government submitted their Equalities Impact Assessment to Parliament, during the passage of the Elections Bill. This is attached. Further analysis using Plymouth City's demographics may find specific challenges facing particular groups, when the various provisions in the Elections Act are implemented.

The RO is required to implement the provisions in the Act. It can be expected that additional measures may be needed, in order to mitigate the impact of the provisions which may have a

detrimental impact on some groups. An example would be the need to ensure broad and deep media coverage, to inform all Plymouth City electors without recognisable photo ID of the voter ID card, and how to apply for this. Additional costs will be incurred, in order to reduce any negative impact of the Act on the ability of electors to exercise their democratic right to vote.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	2022 Elections Act – Voter ID							
B	Elections Act – Guide to Key Milestones							
C	List of Acceptable IDs GB							
D	New Burdens Allocation 22/23 and 23/24							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	DJN.2 2.23.3 12	Leg	EJ/388 51/6.1 2.22(1)	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Assets	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: David Northey											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 05/12/2022											

Cabinet Member approval: *approved by email*

Date approved: 06/12/2022