

Tracking Decisions Action Update:

Action from 16 January 2023 Audit and Governance Committee – Minute 60:

“The Committee agreed that the Chair, Councillor Luggar, would write to the Chief Executive, Tracey Lee, and request urgent clarity on the issues raised with regards to voter ID at future elections, with specific focus upon plans for raising awareness for Plymouth residents.”

Response from Tracey Lee, Chief Executive

Voters in English local elections this May will be required to show photo ID for the first time.

We have already begun our Voter ID awareness campaign which reinforces the Electoral Commission’s campaign

The Elections team have also started processing Voter ID applications, 35 as of 24 January 2023. We can confirm that straightforward applications take 2 minutes, applications with simple queries 8-10 minutes and for ones which requires further investigations or actions – requires at least 48 hours as these require corresponding with the elector.

Resources:

Plymouth City Council have been allocated £40K by the Cabinet office to assist us in new burdens for Voter ID, Accessibility, Training and Contact Centre costs. If the new burden funding allocation given to PCC does not cover the justified cost of Elections Act implementation, we will be able to apply for additional new burden funding via a justification led bid process.

PCC Elections team have now all been trained to process VAC applications. A definitive PCC working process map, based on the Cabinet Office. process map which has been enhanced/simplified after working through live applications, will be agreed in the next Election Board to make sure that all our process are robust, consistent and auditable.

We will be training a number of officers from the Chief Executive’s team (Democratic Support, EAs and PAs) to be part of the processing team during busy hours (pre-election period).

Full training platform will be given to all elections staff, especially for polling station staff and officers (e.g. Call Centre staff, Tactical team, Polling Station Inspectors) supporting them on the day, for the May 2023 elections.

Communications and Engagement:

Our Voter ID comprehensive communications and engagement plan is now fully operational. We are closely working with our City partners (Higher Education providers etc) in getting our core messages across:

- Register to Vote
- You will need an ID to vote in polling stations for the 2023 May elections

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- Setting out list of acceptable IDs
- How to apply for VAC
- You do not need an ID to vote if you are a postal voter

Voter ID and the issues/risks it might bring to Plymouth have been fully documented. Our work is to make sure that issues/risks we think might arise have clear and fully resourced mitigations. Voter ID and all the new processes/risks it might impose is not just a concern to Plymouth but for the entire nation. We are closely working with our colleagues in Devon and across the country, the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators to make sure that all our concerns are recorded and listened to.