



Scrutiny committee

Date: **Thursday, 20 July 2023**
Time: **16:30**
Venue: **Mancroft room City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

There will be a pre meeting for members of the committee at 16:00.

Committee members:

Councillors:

Ackroyd (Chair)
Thomas (Va) (Vice chair)
Carrington
Driver
Fox
Francis
Fulton-McAlister (M)
Galvin
Haynes
Osborn
Padda
Prinsley
Stutely
Thomas (Vi)

For further information please contact:

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Agenda

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- 1 Apologies**

To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 Declarations of interest**

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting).
- 3 Minutes** **5 - 8**

To agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023.
- 4 Report from the Norfolk Health and Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

To receive an update from the council's representative on the Norfolk Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee.
- 5 Report from the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel**

To receive an update from the council's representative on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Sub Panel.
- 6 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Report 2023-24** **9 - 14**

Purpose: To assist scrutiny committee members to review and agree the scrutiny committee work programme 2023-24.
- 7 Scrutiny committee review of the impact of the Elections Act 2022, particularly that relating to Voter ID on Norwich City Council Elections in 2023** **15 - 62**

Purpose: To consider the impact of the Elections Act 2022, particularly that relating to Voter ID on Norwich City Council Elections in 2023 and planning for required future changes.

Date of publication: **Thursday, 13 July 2023**



Scrutiny Committee

16:40 to 18:20

29 June 2023

Present: Councillors Ackroyd (chair), Thomas (Va) (vice chair following appointment) Carrington, Champion (substitute for Haynes) Driver, Fox, Francis, Galvin, Maguire (substitute for Fulton-McAlister), Osborn, Padda, Prinsley, Sands (M) (substitute for Stutely) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Fulton-McAlister, Haynes and Stutely

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Appointment of vice chair

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Vaughan Thomas as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Appointment of the member and substitute member of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC)

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Prinsley as the representative and Councillor Galvin as the substitute to NHSOC for the ensuing civic year.

4. Appointment of the member and substitute member of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Sub Panel (NCCSPSP)

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Stutely as the representative and Councillor Osborn as the substitute to NCCSPSP for the ensuing civic year.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2023.

6. Scrutiny committee work programme 2022-23

The chair introduced the report and said that members had taken part in a useful work programme setting workshop in May with training also held for committee members. She referred to the proposed work programme at appendix B to the report and proposed to confirm the items for each month in turn.

The chair referred to the extraordinary meeting which would be held on 25 July and would consider the item on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. A member asked what the format of the meeting would be. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) replied that officers would be bringing a report to members which would include feedback from the Zainab project and also responses to points specifically made by Councillor Galvin. Officers were looking to facilitate a meeting with the county council's abroad team as well as inviting representatives from the Zainab café, the Red Cross and Bridge plus. Serco had also been invited to attend the meeting but had not confirmed whether they would be present.

Members discussed the meeting to be held on 20 July. There was consensus that the Elections Act was a timely and important topic to consider with members being particularly interested in the following points:

- What the council had the power to do with regards to mitigating any impact of the introduction of voter ID
- What the impact of voter ID was at the last election
- What did the council put in place this year in the lead up to the local elections i.e. communication plans
- Feedback from groups such as Election Agents
- What the council would be doing for the next set of elections, especially with the prospect of a general election
- What the introduction of similar measures for postal voting would mean in terms of impact on residents.

The committee considered the topic of communicating with the council / consultations. It was suggested that the topic could be split across two meetings, with one meeting focussing on communications and the other looking at how the council conducted consultations.

A member suggested that due to the topic being very broad, a task and finish group could be the best way to look at the issues. The committee had recently agreed a model terms of reference for items to be added to the work programme and the head of legal and procurement said that she would be happy to work these through for the topic and bring a draft to the next meeting on 20 July.

Some members of the committee felt that this was an important topic as difficulties communicating with the council was an issue that their residents had raised a number of times.

A member commented that if the topic was split over two meetings, this would take time away from consideration of the Elections Act which was an important topic and directly affected all Norwich residents.

Another member said that they understood that work was already underway around how residents communicated with the council which meant that it was not necessary for the committee to also consider this.

A motion was moved and seconded that the item on communicating with the council and consultations be removed from the committee's work programme.

A member said that she was disappointed that the committee wanted to remove the item as it was an issue of extreme importance to residents. Another member added that the topics had already been agreed in principle at a work programming workshop and one of the functions of the committee was to consider areas in which the council may need improvement.

The motion was put to a vote and with eight voting in favour of removal and six against, the item was removed from the work programme.

Members discussed the meeting on 21 September and asked whether the Corporate Plan update was confirmed. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) said that the timetable for the update was being defined and an update could be provided at the meeting on 20 July. A member asked whether the item on communicating with the council and consultations could be taken to the September meeting if the Corporate Plan update was not ready. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) replied that this could be considered at the next meeting.

Members agreed that the review of how the council addresses anti-social behaviour should come to the October meeting.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy had been identified for consideration at the November meeting of the committee, along with a review of the Environmental programme.

A member suggested that the Parks and open Spaces Strategy could be moved to the March meeting of the committee as it was a non-statutory document. The head of legal and procurement said that she would speak to the officers developing the strategy about timelines for the document. Members discussed the need to fit scrutiny of certain documents around the work of officers to ensure that resources were being used appropriately. It was also more useful for members to pre-scrutinise documents to add value.

It was agreed that a review of the Environmental programme should be held by the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel (CEEEP) rather than the scrutiny committee.

The Equality Information report and the business plans of the council's wholly owned companies were agreed for the December meeting.

Members discussed the items proposed for the January meeting. The chair said that there had been a suggestion from members that the topic of retrofitting be taken forward using a task and finish group. This would allow evidence to be considered from other councils and meetings to be held with officers, before bringing all the information thorough into a report to the committee. A member commented that although it would be useful to understand what approach other councils had taken to retrofitting, the information would need to be presented in the context of the council's financial position.

Members agreed that the Love Norwich review was an important piece of work and should remain as the substantive item for the January meeting.

RESOLVED to

1) add the following items to the scrutiny committee work programme:

- a) 20 July 2023 – The Elections Act
- b) 25 July 2023 (extraordinary meeting) – Welcoming refugees and asylum seekers
- c) 21 September – Corporate Plan update (subject to confirmation on timelines)
- d) 12 October – How the council addresses anti-social behaviour
- e) 23 November 2023 – Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (subject to confirmation on timelines)
- f) 7 December 2023 – Equality Information report and NCSL and Lion Homes business plans
- g) 25 January 2024 – Love Norwich review
- h) 1 February 2024 – 2024-25 budget setting
- i) 21 March 2024 – Biodiversity Strategy outcomes

2) Ask officers to:

- a) Confirm the timelines of the Corporate Plan and Parks and Open Spaces Strategy; and
- b) Bring draft Terms of Reference for a task and finish group on retrofitting to a future committee meeting.

CHAIR



Committee Name: Scrutiny

Committee Date: 20/07/2023

Report Title: Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To assist scrutiny committee members to review and agree the scrutiny committee work programme 2023-24

Recommendation:

That members consider and agree the proposed scrutiny committee work programme for 2023-24.

Policy Framework

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city corporate priority

Report Details

Developing a work programme for the scrutiny committee

1. Members had an informal work programme setting workshop on 25 May 2023 and discussed the TOPIC forms which had been submitted at the end of the last civic year. The titles of which are listed below:
 - Biodiversity strategy outcomes
 - Communicating with the council
 - Consultations
 - Dealing with damp
 - Love Norwich and a cleaner city
 - Love Norwich initiative review
 - Measures to increase participation of citizens in voting to overcome the impact of the Elections Act
 - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
 - Retrofitting Norwich stock
 - Review of Environmental Programme
 - Review of how the city council addresses anti social behaviour
 - Social Housing regulation bill
2. Members agreed that the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the Dealing with Damp TOPIC forms would be addressed through member briefings which officers will arrange.
3. Members agreed to remove the Levelling Up item from the work programme as the Council had been unsuccessful in its bid for Levelling Up funds, and it was not clear when the Levelling Up Bill would receive parliamentary approval.
4. It was agreed to continue the welcoming asylum seekers and refugees item and an extraordinary committee meeting has been scheduled for the 25 July.
5. Members discussed the proposed work programme at the scrutiny committee meeting on 29 June and it was agreed to remove the communicating with the council / consultations topic from the work programme.
6. It was noted that the timing of the corporate plan topic was yet to be confirmed and it was hoped that there would be an update for this meeting.
7. Members agreed that the review of how the council addresses anti-social behaviour should come to the October meeting.
8. The timing for consideration of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was discussed with a proposal to move it to March 2024. It was agreed that the head of legal and procurement would discuss this with officers to ensure that pre scrutiny of the strategy could take place.
9. Members agreed to refer the review of the Environment programme to the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel (CEEEP) for consideration as part of its work programme.

10. The topics for the December scrutiny committee meeting were confirmed as the Equality Information report and the business plans of the council's wholly owned companies.
11. Members discussed the topics for the January meeting and discussed the retrofitting topic and it was agreed that officers would bring a draft Terms of Reference for a task and finish group for this item to a future meeting. It was agreed that the Love Norwich review would be the substantive item at the January meeting.

Recurring items

12. There are certain items that occur throughout the civic year that are programmed in. These are the scrutiny committee work programme (each meeting), Equality Information Report (December/ January), the Council's companies Business Plans (December) and pre-scrutiny of the proposed budget (February).
13. Updates are received from the council's representative on the Norfolk Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC) and the council's representative on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel (NCCSPSSP).

Scope for scheduling items onto the work programme

14. It has been previously agreed that committee should agree as few as possible substantive topics per meeting. The main reason for this is to ensure that there is enough time for the committee to effectively consider the issues and make fair and evidence based recommendations. Ideally one substantive item per meeting would be the aim.
15. Members are able to revise the work programme on a month basis if and when required due to changing events. This is done through the work programme standing item at each meeting. Members therefore may wish to consider keeping some space on the work programme to facilitate this.

Consultation

16. Members of the scrutiny committee considered work programme setting at an informal meeting on 25 May 2023 and agreed the proposed work programme at the scrutiny committee meeting held on 29 June 2023. Members of the public are encouraged to submit topics for scrutiny via a form on the council's website. The portfolio holder will be briefed as part of the regular portfolio holder briefings.

Implications

Financial and Resources

17. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

18. Any impact on resources resulting from this report will be accommodated within existing budgets or the relevant approvals will be sought if additional budget is required.

Legal

19. No specific legal implications of this report.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	None
Children and Adults Safeguarding	None
Environmental Impact	None

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
None		

Other Options Considered

20. There have been no other options considered for this report.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

21. This is a standing item on the scrutiny committee agenda to allow members to review the scrutiny committee work programme.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Scrutiny committee work programme 2023-24

Contact Officer:

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Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-2024

Date	Item	Portfolio Holder Senior Officer Report author
20/07/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	The Elections Act	Cllr Kendrick Stuart Guthrie Tom Henry
25/07/2023	Welcoming refugees and asylum seekers to Norwich TOPIC, hear from organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers.	
21/09/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Corporate Plan Update (TBC)	
12/10/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Review of how the council addresses anti-social behaviour	
23/11/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (TBC)	
07/12/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Equality Information report	
	Lion Homes Business Plan	
	NCSL Business Plan	

Date	Item	Portfolio Holder Senior Officer Report author
25/01/2024	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	LOVE Norwich review	
01/02/2024	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Budget	
21/03/2024	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	
	Work programme setting	
	Biodiversity Strategy outcomes	
	Retrofitting – Task and Finish Group	



Committee name: Scrutiny

Committee date: 20/07/2023

Report title: Scrutiny committee review of the impact of the Elections Act 2022, particularly that relating to Voter ID on Norwich City Council Elections in 2023

Portfolio: Councillor Paul Kendrick

Report from: Democratic and elections manager

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

To consider the impact of the Elections Act 2022, particularly that relating to Voter ID on Norwich City Council Elections in 2023 and planning for required future changes.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee reviews the impact of Voter ID at the Norwich City Council Elections on 4 May 2023 and determines any recommendations it wishes to make.

The Chief Executive as Returning Officer (RO) and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has a statutory duty to ensure free and fair elections and to ensure as many residents are registered as possible. In discharging these duties, the RO/ERO will take account the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee but will retain the right to make changes if deemed appropriate for reasons of practicality and/or other circumstances.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.

- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the corporate priority that Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

Background

1. On 28 April 2022, the Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent.

The Act sought to –

- require voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued.
 - require Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) based in local authorities to issue free electoral identification documents – which are called 'Voter Authority Certificates' (VACs) to eligible electors who apply for one.
 - require postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years.
 - Restrict the handling of postal votes, including limiting the number of postal votes an individual can hand in at a polling station or council office.
 - further limit the number of people someone may act as proxy for.
 - extend accessibility to elections including requiring Returning Officers to take all reasonable steps to provide support for those with a disability in polling stations.
 - simplify and clarify the offence of undue influence.
 - change the voting and candidacy arrangements for EU voters.
 - allow all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK.
2. Members should be aware that the above changes have not all been implemented at once. Only the introduction of the Voter ID and Voter Authority Certificates and changes to accessibility were put in place for the Norwich City Council elections in May 2023.
 3. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are still developing the policy and secondary legislation for changes to postal votes, overseas electors and candidacy rights and we are expecting this from October 2023. This report does highlight those further changes however we do not yet have all the detail.
 4. The majority of changes will and have resulted in a new financial burden being placed on the local authority. The Government has committed that where changes in the Act will result in a new burden on local authorities, these costs will be initially covered in line with new burdens principles.
 5. A summary of what we have received so far and what we can expect to be funded is provided later in this report. However, at this stage we only have the

cost lines that will be funded via the New Burdens Funding process. As policy is still being determined some elements may change or we are still awaiting further detail.

6. The provisions contained within the Elections Act will apply at:
 - UK Parliamentary elections in Great Britain
 - Local elections and referendums in England (this included Mayoral elections)
 - PCC elections in England and Wales
7. As Voter Identification in polling stations and accessibility changes came into effect for May 2023, this report will concentrate on those two areas first, but it will refer to the future impact of other provisions of the Act later in the report.

Part 1: The impact on the election in Norwich in 2023

New rules on Voter ID in Polling Stations

8. Electors now must show an approved form of photo identification before voting.
9. Photographic identification that can be used to vote include the can be found in Appendix 1.
10. Work/student passes, railcards and photocopies of identification documents or pictures on mobile phones are not acceptable.
11. If electors cannot provide one of the required forms of identification as set out in legislation, they will be able to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate from the elections office.
12. The Voter Authority Certificate is a A4 paper-based document with inherent security features. It displays the elector's name and photograph, the date of issue and the issuing local authority. Electors have a range of options to choose from when applying for a Voter Authority Certificate - in person, by post or online. The deadline to apply for a voter authority certificate at the elections in May was 5pm on 25 April 2023.
13. In the event that an elector loses all their forms of identification before the deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate has passed, or if their identification is stolen, destroyed or damaged beyond use, they may apply for a Temporary Voter Authority Certificate.
14. If an elector loses their identification after the deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate, the Electoral Registration Officer has the ability to allow the appointment of an emergency proxy up to 5pm on polling day.
15. Regardless of the way a person applies, there is a check as to the person's electoral registration status, and their identity needs to be confirmed. It is

important to note that any of the approved photographic identification does not need to be in date to be used – it just needs to bear a likeness to the voter.

16. Polling stations are now required to have a private area for the elector to produce identification in private if requested. Privacy screens may be used for this purpose.
17. No other person other the presiding officer and poll clerk may inspect the document unless permitted by the elector.
18. A presiding officer must refuse to give an elector a ballot paper if they have reasonable doubt that the photographic identification does not look like the elector, or if they reasonably suspect the documents to be forged. A refusal to deliver the ballot paper to the voter is final and may not be questioned in any way. A refusal to deliver the ballot paper to a voter is subject to review on an election petition.
19. The GOV.UK online application service for Voter Authority Certificates commenced in January 2023, alongside a media campaign by the Electoral Commission called 'Get ready to vote in person'.
20. Before the election in May 2023, DLUHC research suggested that around 2-4% of people may require identification issued by the ERO – for Norwich this translates to approximately people 2000 to 4000 electors. However, these figures were contested by political group and voting rights campaigners.
21. DLUHC also suggested that each Voter Authority Certificates application could take up to 8 minutes of staff time to process.

Concerns around the Introduction of Voter ID prior to the election in May 2023

22. The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) in its letter to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 29 September 2022 stated several concerns around the timing of the introduction of Voter ID.
23. The AEA stated in the letter, that as the statutory instrument (SI) containing the detail around Voter ID was not laid until 6 November 2022 and would not come into effect until the following January, this went against the 'Gould Principles' which recommended electoral legislation should not be introduced within six months of an election.
24. The late provision of detailed legislative processes could introduce significant risks to a delivery of a safe election. Due to the lateness of the legislation, the Electoral Commission could not finalise guidance until the Autumn of 2022 which could have had the potential of a knock-on effect on election teams, poll preparations and polling station staff training. This could have caused an inconsistent approach across the electoral community.
25. Concerns at this point were also raised around the development of the online Voter Authority Certificate portal, particularly concerning additional time elections teams would need to spend on each application and the processing time.

26. Finally, the late timing of the secondary legislation meant that the national communications campaign led by the Electoral Commission did not start until a later stage as:

- a. It wasn't possible to communicate to electors which form of ID was acceptable until this was laid in legislation
- b. It wasn't possible to communicate to electors how to register for the Voter Authority Certificate until the registration system went live in October

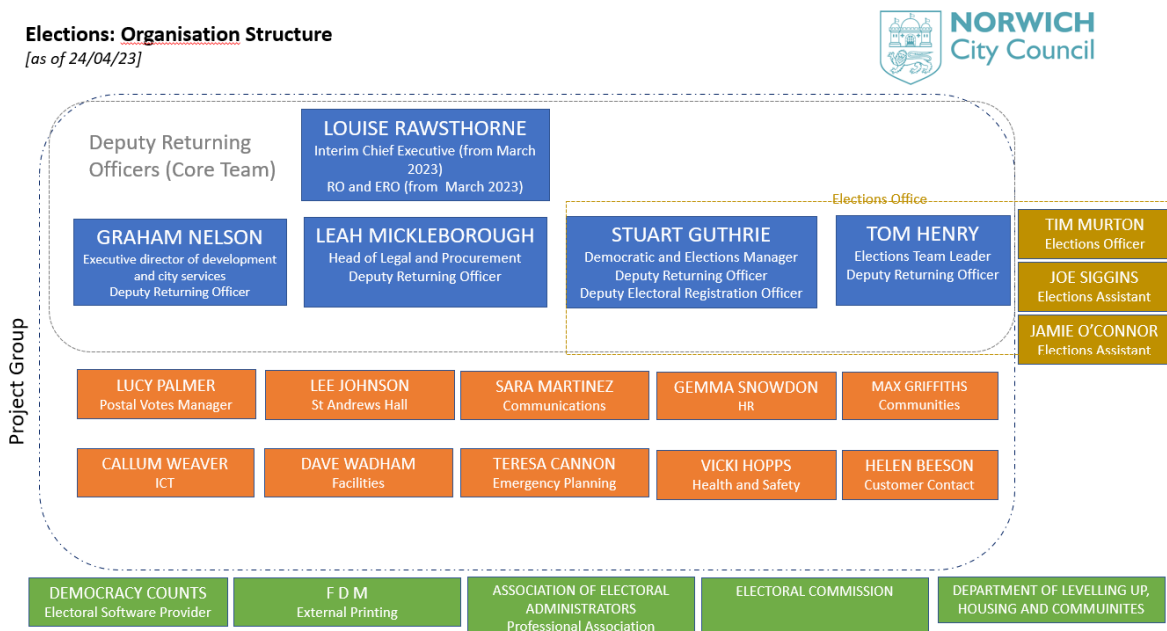
27. The Electoral Reform Society published the following figures for alleged impersonations at polling stations.

- 2015 – 26
- 2017 – 28
- 2018 – 8
- 2019 – 34

28. The electorate in the Great Britain ranged from 51 to 58 million during this period.

Voter ID preparations in Norwich

29. Planning for the introduction of Voter ID in Norwich started shortly after the last election under the old rules in May 2022. The Elections Project Group was set up in the Autumn and met regularly to oversee all preparations in Norwich, including plans for Voter ID. This consisted of the Returning Officer and key staff within the council.



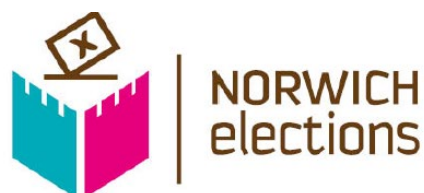
30. The Project Group working with the project plan and risk registers ensured the following was implemented prior to the election on 4 May 2023.

Training

31. The elections team received training around preparations for the Elections Act and the introduction of Voter ID. This centred around training provided by the AEA. This included an online course which went through the specifics of the legislation and how to train polling stations staff. The AEA also held a national seminar in September 2022 and conference in February 2023 which was attended by members of elections team.
32. A member of the elections team was on the business change network hosted by DLUHC. This allowed early sharing of detail around the online VAC portal preparations, new burdens funding and secondary legislation details. Using this training the elections team were able to provide training and updates to staff and key stakeholders within Norwich. The following briefings were held before the election:

Date	Training	Recipients
1 December 2022	Voter ID Briefing Session	Candidates and Agents
8 December 2022	Voter ID Initial Training Session	Presiding Officers
9 January 2023	Voter ID Briefing Session	Councillors
13 January 2023	Voter ID Briefing Session	Customer Contact Team
23 January 2023	Voter ID Initial Training Session	Presiding Officers
22 February 2023	Webinar Community Groups	Community Groups
3 March 2023	Voter ID Initial Training Session	Polling Station Inspectors
10 March 2023	Voter ID Initial Training Session	Polling Station Inspectors
20 March 2023	Candidates and Agents Briefing	Candidates and Agents
13 April 2023	Polling Station Training	Polling Station Staff
17 April 2023	Polling Station Training	Polling Station Staff
20 April 2023	Polling Station Training	Polling Station Staff

Communication and Engagement



Thursday 4 May 2023

Draft communications plan

27/02/23 -V3

MADE WITH
beautiful.ai

33. A comprehensive communications plan was set out regarding the council's preparations for the introduction of Voter ID and was led by the communications team. The plan also covered other aspects of the election planning including key dates such as registration and postal vote deadlines. The plan can be found in appendix 2 to this report.
34. It was established that that the aim would be to have an engaged electorate that understands they have a role to play in affecting local policy and decision-making by choosing representatives which reflect their interest; and what they need to do in order to exercise their vote.
35. The plan had the following objectives.
- Residents are engaged to register to vote
 - Residents understand the new requirement to show photo identification to vote in polling stations
 - Residents understand the different options available to cast their vote
 - Results are communicated in a timely and engaging fashion
 - Media are informed about the election and effectively managed/communicated with
36. The key messages were:-
- Your vote matters.
 - Local elections shape you neighbourhood and community
 - Don't miss out on your chance to vote
 - Register to vote
 - There is a range of ways you can vote. Due to new rules introduced by government, if you want to vote at a polling station, you will have to present photo ID from an approved list
37. The audience was:-
- Norwich residents.
 - Groups identified as less likely to have Photo ID
 - Students registered in Norwich
 - Colleagues
 - Councillors
 - Voluntary organisations and other stakeholders
 - Local Media
38. Stakeholders (Partners)
- UEA/NUA to engage students
 - Norwich City Council community enabling and housing team to reach priority groups
 - Electoral Commission
 - DLUHC
 - Other councils
 - Association for the Electoral Administrators
 - Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations and other stakeholders who can help with spreading the word about the changes

- Councillors
- Candidates, Agents and Local Political Parties
- Local Media

39. The plan used the following timeline and was used to engage with the above groups. It also aligned with the national campaign from the Electoral Commission.

Date	Subject	Action	Channel
January 2023 – April 2023	Voter ID	Social Media posts explaining new rules	Twitter/Facebook
February/March 2023	Voter ID	Voter ID council tax insert will all bills	Mail and Email
February/March 2023	Voter ID	Citizen Article and tenants magazine	Website and mailout to residents
March 2023	Voter ID	Flyers and posters to community groups, housing and libraries.	Emails, posters and booklets
March 2023	Voter ID	Posters for communal area of Housing blocks	Posters and booklets
March 2023	Voter ID	Press Release	Local Media
March 2023	Voter ID	City Matters	Internal communication
April 2023	Voter ID	Stall at UEA to promote Voter ID and registration	In person
April 2023	Voter ID	Radio interview – Future Radio	Local Media
April 2023	Voter ID	Finalised Voter ID information on website linked to all communications from elections office	Website / emails / letters

40. The Electoral Commission ran a campaign from January 2023 concentrating on the need to bring photographic ID to the polling station. This included social media, TV, radio and press releases. As part of the local communications plan, these were shared and promoted on the council's social media.

41. All poll cards sent to voters were redesigned for 2023 election. The poll card sent to electors who voted in person carried information around what was an acceptable form of photo ID on the back page. This was published at the time of dispatch.

Staffing

42. It was decided by the Returning Officer to keep the same levels of staffing at polling stations that was in place in 2021 and 2022. There had been an increase in levels of polling station staff in 2021 (and maintained in 2022) due to public safety reasons during the Covid-19 pandemic and on a “like for like” basis, staffing would have been reduced for 2023. The reason for keeping the same levels was because of expected additional queries about Voter ID and potential queue management if the voting process was slower. This meant we met or exceeded the Electoral Commission guidelines on numbers at each polling station.

Set Up

43. There were additional logistical requirements due to the introduction of Voter ID. Each polling station needed a space for a Voter ID check to be made in private. In 49 polling stations there was an additional room for a private check and the remaining 9 stations had a privacy booth in the same room. There was additional paperwork and signage required for the Voter ID which was prepared prior to polling day.

Audit

44. In March 2023 there was a review of Elections completed by Internal Audit. A review of Elections was included in the 2022/23 audit plan. The objective of the audit was to review the systems and controls in place over the council's planning for the 2023 elections and preparedness for the changes required under the Elections Act 2022. The audit considered only the changes that are required for the election in May 2023, not any of the changes that apply from later in the year.

45. The audit identified a number of areas where controls were found to have been operating as expected with no issues and no suggested actions or enhancements for management to consider, in particular:

- a) There was a project plan for the delivery of the elections in May 2023, which incorporates all of the new requirements of the Elections Act 2022. Each task or activity in the plan had a start date, due date and a responsible officer.
- b) Performance and progress against the project plan was monitored through monthly meetings of a project group. These meetings include a review of key tasks that have been completed, upcoming work and risk monitoring.
- c) A training plan has been produced to provide necessary training on the changes to the election process to all staff who work on the election. This includes officers in the Elections team, Customer Contact Team, IT and polling station staff. Briefings have also been provided to Members, senior management and candidates and agents.
- d) A public awareness campaign is planned, to ensure that voters are aware of the changes to voting and elections, particularly the new

requirements for photo identification when voting in polling stations. Information on this is available on the Council's website, including how to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate to use as photo ID for voting.

- e) Surveys of polling stations are undertaken to ensure that they provide an appropriate place for voting, considering factors such as facilities and health and safety. The surveys have been expanded this year to include the new conditions around accessibility and privacy, required under the Elections Act 2022.
- f) Election spending is tracked and monitored on a spreadsheet. Where expenditure is funded from an external source, such as new burdens funding from central government, this is highlighted on the spreadsheet, so the Council is able to evidence what the funding has been used for.

46. The audit concluded with no suggested actions / improvements presented to management for consideration.

The Voter ID experience in Norwich on 4 May 2023

47. The election took place in Norwich and was administrated in accordance with the law and without challenge from any of the candidates or political parties standing.

48. However, there were 68 voters who were unable to vote due to not having an acceptable form of photo ID. There were also 116 incidents of voters arriving without an approved form of photo ID but returning later to vote.

49. There were 316 VACs issued by the Electoral Registration Officer between 16 January 2023 and the deadline on 25 April 2023. 165 VACs were used at polling stations.

50. There were 26 applications for VACs submitted on the deadline.

51. There were no temporary VACs issued in Norwich and 5 emergency proxies issued to an elector not having photo ID on polling day.

Voter ID data from polling stations by ward

Ward	VACs Issued	VACs used in polling stations	Total number of electors that turned up without photo ID	Returned with ID	Did not return
BOWTHORPE	16	7	10	7	3
CATTON GROVE	25	13	16	11	4
CROME	22	8	14	10	5
EATON	17	12	24	12	12
LAKENHAM	24	12	17	9	8
MANCROFT	30	10	12	12	0
MILE CROSS	32	19	11	7	4
NELSON	27	17	15	10	5
SEWELL	26	17	11	9	2
THORPE HAMLET	27	16	8	6	2
TOWN CLOSE	16	8	16	7	9
UNIVERSITY	16	6	13	10	3
WENSUM	38	20	17	6	11
Grand Total	316	165	184	116	68

52. Four electors that did not return stated that they did not have ID because they disagreed with the requirement.

53. No electors applied for the Anonymous Electors' Document, therefore no electors turned up with one in the polling station. There are 6 anonymous electors in Norwich, 4 of them are postal voters, with 2 of them setting up a postal vote ahead of this year's election.

54. No electors were added to the Ballot Paper Refusal List which is document which is used if a presiding officer doubts the likeness of the ID provided or suspects that the ID is forged.

Privacy Screen usage

55. One voter requested a private space to have their photo ID checked.

Turnout figures

	Total Voters	Turnout
2018	34,839	34.61%
2019	34,518	34.91%
2021	36,862	36.23%
2022	36,346	36.41%
2023	36,483	35.79%

56. Turnout dropped by 0.62% across Norwich since the election in 2022 (as there were more electors on the register in 2023, the overall number of voters rose)

Turned away comparison with other Norfolk authorities and comparable urban districts in the eastern region

	Total turned away	Returned	Did not return
Norwich	184	116	68
South Norfolk	107	69	38
Kings Lynn	88	59	29
North Norfolk	91	62	29
Breckland	76	54	22
Great Yarmouth	63	42	21
Broadland	66	46	20

	Total turned away	Returned	Did not return
Norwich	184	116	68
Cambridge	302	176	126
Ipswich	179	134	45
Hertsmere	249	191	58
St Albans	196	110	86
Peterborough	310	200	110

57. Norwich had a significantly higher turned away figure than other Norfolk authorities although had lower figures than other comparable urban eastern region authorities.

Polling Station experience and feedback

58. The Elections Office received 46 feedback forms from our 58 presiding officers.

59. They were asked how they thought the day generally went and the following was reported.

	Reports returned
Generally favourable	2
Nothing to report	4
Reports of unhappy electors	25
Generally unfavourable	6
Unfavourable	8
Very unfavourable	1

60. Almost all polling stations reported examples of unfavourable views on the requirement to bring photo ID into polling stations from electors. Staff recorded that a sizable minority wanted it recorded that they disagreed with the new process. A smaller number of presiding officers (15) noted that there was a persistent negativity to the new requirements, with comments from electors including that “voter ID is targeting people who are not better off”, that “voter ID makes it more difficult for the most vulnerable in society to take part in the democratic process”, “the government is disenfranchising our right to vote” and that “voter fraud has never been a real issue in this country.” One presiding officer remarked that around one-fifth of electors made unfavourable comments on the changes.

61. One presiding officer reported back that “there were some electors who said their family members who would normally vote could not due to lack of ID”. One case included a son who “had not bothered to sort” any photographic ID. He was instructed to apply online for a Voter Authority Certificate. Others attended the polling station with a paper bus pass, their work pass [including one NHS pass] and a paper driving licence.

62. Whilst most of the protest was largely peaceful, several presiding officers reported an increased number of incidents of anger or aggression to Norwich City Council elections staff. One presiding officer, and a number of poll clerks, have requested zero tolerance/anti abuse posters in the future. One elector ripped up their ballot paper in protest.

63. The most significant incident happened at a polling station in Town Close. A voter who did not want to show his photo ID staged a sit in for several hours before eventually voting and leaving. It has to be noted that the voter was very friendly and peaceful throughout the protest.

64. The feedback on how Norwich City Council managed the process was largely positive, with 43 out of the 46 respondents not reporting any issues. Two presiding officers noted the difficulty of recording individuals that turned up with no voter ID on the Voter Evaluation Form and one noted that the process was longer. A few presiding officers stated that whilst there were no issues for a local election, that completing all necessary processes would be far harder for a General Election.

Elections Office experience and feedback

65. The elections team worked hard to ensure the elections were administrated in accordance with the law and without challenge, however there were additional pressures due to the changes around Voter ID. VAC application processing was completed online using the gov.uk web portal. There were several issues after the portal went live in January, including a period of downtime in which no processing could be completed, the downtime lasted from 30 March to 4 April 2023.
66. Processing of applications was an additional activity at already busy time. If a resident could not complete the application online, they were required to complete the application in writing and photo was required to be attached to the application. This meant that for many residents an appointment was required at City Hall so a photo could be taken by the elections team.
67. As described earlier in the report, an intensive training plan was put in place to ensure all staff and stakeholders were sufficiently trained on the changes. This took additional time alongside all the other election preparations.
68. The requirement to have a private space in each polling station for a photo ID check meant additional visits to polling stations to ensure this was in place. This took place alongside other preparations around polling stations.
69. On polling day, the customer contact team and election team took more calls from polling stations staff and voters than would normally be expected at a local election so in some cases phones calls took longer to be answered. Due to this being the first year of new requirement, it meant phone calls were often longer than usual.

The use of polling station staff ('Greeters') outside the venues

70. As with previous elections at Norwich, we used polling station staff outside of the venue to assist reside as they arrive to vote. This was the situation in 38 of our 58 polling stations. This year we also asked them to assist with queries from residents about Voter ID. The following guidance was provided to staff.
 - If the elector has ID, they should go into the polling station
 -
 - If the elector does not have ID, but they can go home and get some, they should be allowed to do so, but the meeter/greeter should ask them to tell the poll clerks that they have gone back to for photo ID
 -
 - If the elector has no ID, and has no ID to go home and collect, take them into the polling station to record and possibly call the office
71. Unfortunately, there was nationally misinformation being posted on social media, stating that staff were being used intentionally to suppress their 'turned away' statistics. This led to several queries from political parties and the media about the use of 'greeters'. Greeters were actually used to give information to electors at the point they entered the polling station.

Feedback from Candidate and Agents

72. At the time of publication of the report, we are still awaiting feedback from candidates and agents from the Conservative Party and Green Party.

73. The Labour Agent responded with the following feedback.

“I did not get many complaints about voter ID on election day. Those that I needed to refer to your office on the day and who fed back to me said that the process of getting an emergency proxy was comparatively simple and that they were treated with respect.”

74. The Liberal Democrats Agent responded with the following feedback.

“I think that as far as the Voter ID issue was concerned every effort was made in Norwich by the City Council (and local political parties even where they didn't agree with the need for it) to make voters aware and point them in the right direction for help. What none of us could do was remind individual voters as they left their homes on polling day that they needed to carry suitable ID! Our telling presence was limited this year so we didn't get to know of too many problems at the polling stations but those that I heard of were of voters being sent home for ID, following good-natured conversations with polling station staff. However, anecdotally, I understand that staff checking that voters were carrying ID at the door of one polling station were not informing their Presiding Officer when voters were sent away for suitable ID. Was that not a requirement of the legislation? Presumably it is not possible to know how many of those people returned and how many didn't?”

The national picture

75. The Electoral Commission reported the following data after the election. The figures in this report are based on data received from 226 of the 230 local authorities with elections in May.

Summary of the Electoral Commission National Report into voter ID at May 2023 elections

76. Awareness of the need to bring ID to vote at a polling station was high. Electoral Commission research found that immediately before polling day, 87% of people in England (excluding London, where there were no elections) were aware that they needed to show photo ID to vote at a polling station. In the research carried out immediately following the election, this was 92% of people in areas with elections.

77. Awareness varied across the population and was lowest among younger age groups (82% for 18 to 24-year-olds), Black and minority ethnic communities (82%) and those who said they never vote in local elections (84%).

78. Awareness was significantly lower among people who said they did not have an accepted form of ID (74%) compared with those who did have ID (94%).

79. While overall awareness levels were high, some groups of people were significantly less likely to know about the requirement. This means that some

people may not have known that they needed to show ID until they arrived at the polling station. Those people who did not have any of the accepted forms of ID would not have been able to obtain ID (for example the Voter Authority Certificate) on polling day itself.

80. Awareness and take-up of the Voter Authority Certificate was low. Approximately 89,500 people in Great Britain applied for a Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline on 25 April 2023. Around 25,000 certificates were used as a form of ID on 4 May 2023.
81. In May 2023, awareness of the Voter Authority Certificate was 57% both among the overall population and those who said they did not already have photo ID.
82. The overall number of Voter Authority Certificates applied for and used was low compared with estimates of the number of voters who might not have any other accepted ID (250,000 to 300,000).
83. At least 0.25% of people who tried to vote at a polling station in May 2023 were not able to because of the ID requirement. Data collected in polling stations shows that at least 0.25% of people who tried to vote at a polling station were not issued with a ballot paper because of the ID requirement. At least 0.7% of people who tried to vote at a polling station were initially turned away but around two-thirds of those people (63%) returned later in the day and were able to vote.
84. 0.25% of polling station voters at these elections is approximately 14,000 voters who were not issued with a ballot paper because they could not show an accepted form of ID.
85. However, this is an underestimate, partly as a result of data quality issues but also because some people will have been reminded of the ID requirement before they could be recorded in the data.
86. Around 4% of all non-voters said they did not vote because of the voter ID requirement. Some people who would have wanted to vote at a polling station may have decided not to try, because they realised they did not have accepted ID before attempting to vote. To understand the broader impact of the voter ID requirement, the Electoral Commission carried out a representative public opinion survey across the areas with elections in May. Their survey asked people if they voted in the elections and, if not, why they had chosen not to do so.
87. They found that 4% of people who said they did not vote in these elections gave an unprompted reason related to the ID rules – 3% said they did not have the necessary ID and 1% said they disagreed with the need to show ID. The proportion of non-voters giving an ID-related reason rose from 4% to 7% when survey respondents were selecting from a list of reasons.
88. There is evidence that some people found it harder than others to show accepted voter ID, including disabled people and unemployed people. However, further data collection and analysis are needed to establish a clearer picture and the Electoral Commission will include additional information in a full report in September 2023.

89. The Electoral Commission stated that the UK Government and the wider electoral community (Local Authorities) should work to improve the collection of data at polling stations and recommend that the UK Government should ensure that Returning Officers are able to collect and report monitoring data on the impact of voter ID at future elections, and work is also needed to improve the quality and reliability of data collected at polling stations in future. The current rules state turned away data is only required at UK parliamentary elections.
90. Levels of voter confidence and satisfaction were similar to previous elections.
91. There were high levels of satisfaction with the process of voting, in line with previous comparable elections; 89% of polling station voters said they were very or fairly satisfied.
92. Voters were significantly more likely than non-voters to say that voting is safe. 90% of all voters said voting in a polling station is safe compared to 79% of non-voters. These results are also similar to those recorded after previous comparable elections.

Funding

93. DLUHC agreed to a programme of new burdens funding to cover changes related to the Elections Act 2023. The following has been sent to the Norwich City Council to date.

Date	Fee	Covering
Nov-22	£21,414	Training costs for the introduction Voter ID May 2023 Polling Station set up costs
Apr-23	£38,791	Support in regards for electoral staff costs Support in regards additional poll card costs Support for local communications and engagement Additional training costs
Aug-23	TBC	Equipment costs (privacy screens, cameras, mirrors, etc) Storage costs Call centre Costs
Apr-24	TBC	Additional electoral staff costs for 2024 election
As required	As required	By-election costs
TBC	TBC	Funding for the second tranche of elections act legislation costs (e.g. postal vote, overseas electors and franchise changes)

94. In addition to the above, DLUHC have confirmed there will be additional funding for an UK parliamentary election in 2024. We do not know yet whether this would be as part of new burdens grant or covered in the elections claim submitted for all election costs.
95. It is important to note that not all costs related to elections are covered by additional funding. An example of this, would be additional postal vote applications made due to electors not wanting to provide photo ID at polling stations. These covered were covered by existing council budgets.

Accessibility changes in the Elections Act

96. Alongside changes around Voter ID, the Returning Officer (RO) was required by the Act to extend accessibility to elections including to take all reasonable steps to provide support for those with a disability in polling stations. Every polling station in Norwich was visited by the elections team to assess accessibility before the election in May 2023.

97. The Electoral Commission published guidance on what the RO should consider regarding accessibility at polling stations:

Electoral Commission suggestion	Accessibility in Norwich polling stations at the election in 2023
<p>Chair/seating <i>Provides a place to rest for voters who cannot stand for long periods and a seat for voters who would like to take some time to think before entering the polling booth</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations</p>
<p>Magnifiers <i>These increase the size of the text on a document providing support for voters who are visually impaired to vote independently</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations. Improved A4 magnifiers bought 2023</p>
<p>Tactile voting device <i>This provides support for voters who are visually impaired to mark their vote on the ballot paper in the correct place.</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations. Trialled electronic device (McGonigal Reader) in one polling station</p>
<p>Polling booth at wheelchair level <i>Helps to ensure that voters who use a wheelchair are able access a lower writing surface to ensure they can cast their vote in secret in a booth that is accessible</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations</p>
<p>Appropriate lighting <i>May need additional lighting at the desk; to ensure that voters can clearly see the faces of staff, and in the polling booths; to support voters with visual impairments to be able to read and complete the ballot paper.</i></p>	<p>All lighting at polling stations reviewed February 2023. Additional lighting provided where necessary</p>
<p>Staff name badges <i>These help voters more easily identify that a person is a member of staff in the polling station and is someone they can approach for assistance</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations</p>
<p>Pencil grip <i>These can help voters with dexterity impairments to more easily hold and use a pencil independently</i></p>	<p>Already available at all polling stations</p>
<p>Ramps (for buildings with steps) <i>These support access to a polling station for voters who use a wheelchair or have difficulty using steps</i></p>	<p>All access points reviewed February 2023. Additional ramps provided where required</p>
<p>Temporary alerters or doorbells for any doors that are required to remain shut during the day (for example, fire doors) <i>These provide a way for voters to let polling station staff know that they need assistance to open the door so they can access the polling station</i></p>	<p>Not required as all polling stations had doors open and within sight of polling station, or had a greeter at the entrance point</p>
<p>Reserved parking spaces reserved for voters with disabilities (where parking is available at the venue)</p>	<p>All parking requirements reviewed February 2023. Some polling stations do</p>

	not have sufficient parking as in urban polling district without venue with necessary parking requirements
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98. As noted in the table, the elections team worked with the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and the electoral supplies company Pakflatt to trial an electronic tactile voting device at a polling station in Thorpe Hamlet ward. This was used in place of the manual tactile voting device used at other stations, which uses brail to describe the number order on the ballot paper (the candidate order on the ballot paper needs to be described by the polling station staff or helper).

99. The electronic device allowed the voter to place their ballot paper underneath buttons which provided an audio description of each candidate. The voter, using headphones, could then choose their candidate and mark their ballot paper without any assistance. The device was successfully used at the election by an elector with a visual impairment. This trial will be used to assess the use of electronic tactile voting devices at future elections.

Part 2: Planning for future changes

Future Election Act changes

100. The next tranche of changes are expected to come into force in advance of the May 2024 City and PCC elections in Norwich

101. These are provisions relating to :-

- Absent voting rule changes (legislation takes effect from October 2023)
- Overseas electors (legislation takes effect from January 2024)
- EU citizens' voting and candidacy rights (legislation takes effect from November 2023)
- Postal vote handling and secrecy (legislation takes effect from November 2023)

102. There are also new measures relating to undue influence and intimidation, which will apply at all election types in England and Wales and at UK Parliamentary elections in Scotland, and measures which change the way candidate addresses are provided, which will only apply at UK Parliamentary elections.

103. The detail relating to some of these measures is still to be confirmed.

Personal Identifiers (PI) refresh process changes

104. There will be a new requirement for electors to reapply every three years if they wish to continue to vote by post and proxy. This will replace the current requirement to submit a fresh signature every five years.

105. The council will need to write to all postal and postal proxy voters to tell them about the date on which their existing postal or postal proxy voting arrangements end. In Norwich, this means the council will be required to send around 21,000 postal vote renewals rather than around 7,000 under the old rules. There is a requirement to explain that the voter will need to re-apply by 31 January 2024 if they want to continue to vote by post. If we do not receive a new application by this date, their postal vote will be cancelled.

Online Absent Voting Applications

106. The following provisions are due to come into force in October 2023 and will apply for all future elections in Norwich.
107. Electors will have the option to apply for a postal vote and proxy vote using a new Gov.uk online portal which is in development by DLUHC. There will be new identity verification requirements which will be introduced for all absent vote applications, whether they are made online or by the paper route, except for emergency proxies.
108. All applications will be subject to a DWP check similar to the process for applications to register to vote, this will include national insurance and date of both check on each application. This is different to current process where only a manual electoral register check is completed. For applicants whose identity cannot be verified by the DWP check, there will be a need to follow an exceptions process (details of which have not yet been confirmed.)
109. It is important to note that it is assumed that any paper application for a postal or proxy vote will need to be processed directly into the portal.

Absent vote changes

110. Elections staff will need to be trained on the new technology to process online postal and proxy votes and manage the process of paper applications on to the portal. This is expected to create additional workload for the elections team, particularly in the run up to the next election. As with the introduction of Voter ID last year, the time between the legislation change coming into effect (October 2023) and the date of the next election (May 2024) is again very narrow.
111. Unfortunately, it is not possible to build up detailed plans without seeing the secondary legislation and the new software required for the portal. Any surge in applications due to the UK Parliamentary election being called before January 2025, will also need to be taken into account. This is also impacted by the amount of absent vote refreshes that will be requested this winter as part of the updated personal identifier change.
112. If there are a large number of cancellations due to this exercise, it is expected that many may choose to reapply close to the election causing additional workloads at a critical time. Those voters who do not reapply will be voting at a polling station for the first time since the introduction of Voter ID.
113. We do not yet know who the online portal will interact or integrate with election management system which we use.

114. Finally, any additional verification and identity checks on postal votes close to the application deadline could impact on print deadlines, meaning more postal votes being sent later in the election period.

Overseas Electors changes

115. As from January 2024 the 15-year limit on expatriates' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections will be removed.
116. All British citizens overseas who were previously registered or resident in the UK will be enfranchised (will have the ability to be added to the register) and the registration period will be extended to a maximum of three years. Overseas electors will have the option to re-apply for a postal or refresh their proxy vote, which will then be 'tied' to the new three-year refresh period.
117. We are expecting an increased workload particularly around the checking of previous residency in Norwich. If additional data sources for residency checks are necessary, these will require appropriate data sharing agreements with other public bodies.
118. Secondary legislation is yet to be seen and therefore necessary changes to the electoral management software are not yet available.

EU citizens voting and candidacy rights changes

119. These provisions come into force in November 2023 but will only take effect after the scheduled elections in May 2024. This means it will not come into effect at Norwich City Council and PCC election next year.
120. The right of European Union citizens to register, vote, and stand in UK elections which use the local election franchise will be removed. Two groups of EU citizens will retain their voting and candidacy rights:-
- Qualifying EU citizens' – citizens of EU countries which have a reciprocal agreement with the UK Government, currently Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain.
 - EU citizens who were legally living in the UK before 31 December 2020
121. This change will not affect the rights of citizens from Ireland, Malta or Cyprus who will maintain full voting rights at all elections in the UK.
122. All EU citizens will be written to confirming their status and what action (if any) is required. Those EU citizens who do not have a qualifying status or were not resident before 31 December 2020 will be removed from the electoral register. These new rules will also affect candidacy rights for those EU citizens although elected councillors would be able to serve their full term. There are no current Norwich City councillors affected by this change.
123. The elections team will need to consider how we will factor these changes into training and briefings to ensure understanding of the new rules when supporting candidates and agents and managing the nomination process. We will also have to consider the additional workload around completing this removal and retention of effected EU citizens.

124. There are currently approximately 7,500 qualifying EU citizens on the electoral register of which around 5,500 would not need to reapply as they already qualify. There would need to be a data exercise to establish if they were on databases prior to 31 December 2020 and then a 'write out' to the remaining 2,000 electors.

Postal Vote handling and secrecy changes

125. There will be new restrictions on the handling of postal votes, including:

- a ban on political campaigners handling postal votes, except where the postal vote is their own, that of a close family member or someone that they provide regular care for.
- limits on the number of postal votes that a person can hand in at polling stations and council offices.
- any person who hands in postal votes at polling stations or council offices will be required to complete a form.

126. These take effect for the election in May 2024. The elections team will be required to handle completion of the form and maintaining records of these. Steps will be put in place, to ensure forms are not left at City Hall or polling stations without the appropriate actions taken.

Actions and next steps

127. There are steps which the Returning Officer and elections team will be planning in the next few months prior to the new secondary legislation being in force.

128. The project plan and risk register will be updated to reflect the individual and cumulative impact of the new provisions on our existing workplan and highlight any potential risks which need to be addressed early in the process.

129. As with the first tranche of legislation around Voter ID, we will continue to liaise with other colleagues across the local authority, so that wider corporate risk registers, equality impact assessments and project plans take into account the impact of the changes, ensuring that the necessary resources are made available.

130. The continued use of the elections project group will oversee the project plan and other documents bringing in key colleagues across the council.

131. We will also continue to work with key stakeholders such as:-

- Candidates and Agents
- Political Parties
- DLUHC
- Electoral Commission
- Association of Electoral Administrators
- Voluntary organisations
- Software and print suppliers

132. This will ensure that they are aware of detailed changes.
133. Those involved in implementing the upcoming changes will include the following groups:
- Core/temporary electoral services staff
 - Canvass staff
 - Customer Contact Team / Reception
 - Communications colleagues
 - Polling station staff
134. A training plan will be developed to identify when different staff will need to be trained. This will be alongside training and briefing sessions for other key stakeholders such as councillors, candidate and agents, political parties and the media.
135. The core elections team will continue to attend seminars, conferences and training sessions provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators and the electoral management software supplier. A member of the elections team will continue to attend business change network meetings at DLUHC.
136. As with Voter ID, there will be a need for a comprehensive communications plan developed with the council's communications team. We will be able to use the previous campaign as a basis, concentrating on the new changes but also reinforcing existing arrangements now in place.
137. In terms of Voter ID, it will be important for Returning Officers to build into project plans those challenges identified at the elections in 2023. This is particularly the case for the next UK parliamentary election (to be held by January 2025). The turnout in the Norwich South constituency at the 2019 election was 67% so we are expecting that there will be many residents using photo ID for the first time.
138. The process of using polling station staff to act as 'greeters' outside polling stations need to be clarified by the Electoral Commission. Clear guidance on what can and should be published publicly, and in what format, would be helpful for everyone involved in running and reporting on elections. This could then be shared with other stakeholders and the media well in advance of the next set of scheduled elections.

Consultation

139. The elections team has consulted polling station staff, candidates and agents.

Legal Implications

140. The Chief Executive as Returning Officer (RO) and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has a statutory duty to ensure free and fair elections and to ensure as many residents are registered as possible. In discharging these duties, the RO/ERO will take account of the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee but will retain the right to make changes if deemed appropriate for reasons of practicality and/or other circumstances.

Financial and resources

141. Any decision to recommend a reduction or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
142. Any decisions to increase expenditure will be met through existing budgets or recharged to the appropriate body.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	Access to the democratic process
Health, social and economic impact	Potential disenfranchisement
Crime and disorder	Potential disruptions at polling stations
Children and adults safeguarding	N/A
Environmental impact	Neutral

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Residents not being able to vote in election despite being registered	Residents being disenfranchised	Set out through project plans and risk registers

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

143. To enable the scrutiny committee to review the introduction of Voter ID and other changes contained within the Elections Act and its effect on the electorate in Norwich.


Appendices:






Appendix 1: Accepted forms of photographic identification.

Appendix 2: Communications plan.

Contact officer: Stuart Guthrie

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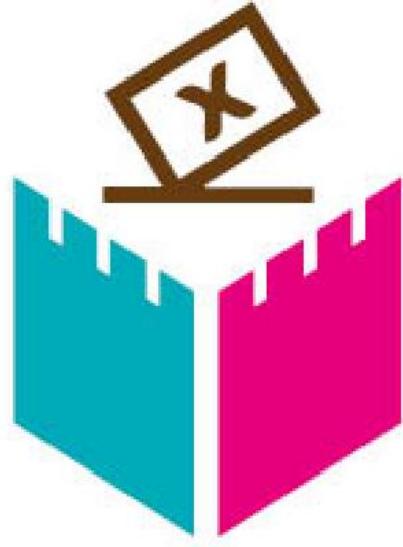
	<p>If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.</p>
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 <p>International travel Passport</p>	 <p>Local travel Certain concessionary travel cards*</p>
 <p>Driving and parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving licence (including provisional licence) • Blue badge 	 <p>Other government-issued documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biometric immigration document • Defence Identity Card • National identity card
 <p>Proof of age Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)</p>	

Accepted forms of photographic identification

You must present one of the following forms of photographic identification in order to vote in person at a polling station:

- A 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
- A driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or an EEA state
- A biometric immigration document
- An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- A Blue Badge
- A national identity card issued by an EEA state
- An Older Person's Bus Pass
- A Disabled Person's Bus Pass
- An Oyster 60+ Card
- A Freedom Pass
- A Scottish National Entitlement Card issued in Scotland
- A 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- A Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card issued in Wales
- A Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A War Disablement SmartPass or War Disabled SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- A Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- An Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland
- A Voter Authority Certificate or a temporary Voter Authority Certificate



NORWICH
elections

Thursday 4 May 2023

Draft communications plan

27/02/23 – V3

Page 41 of 62

AIM:

To have an engaged electorate that understands it has a role to play in affecting local policy and decision-making by choosing representatives that reflect its interests; and what it needs to do in order to exercise its vote.



Communications objectives



Electorate is engaged to register to vote



Electorate understands the different options available to cast votes



Electorate understands the new requirement to show photo ID in polling stations.



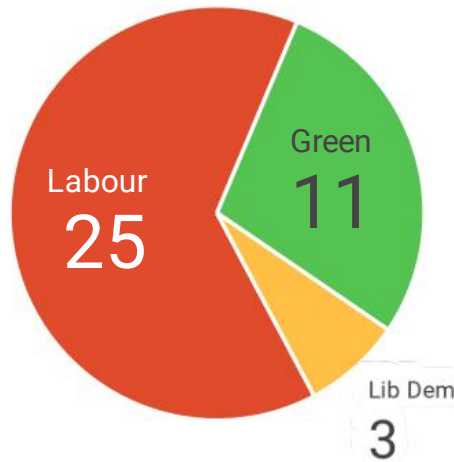
Results are communicated in a timely and engaging way



The media is informed about the election and managed/communicated with

The context – local picture

Political make-up of Norwich City Council following May 2022 election



On Thursday 4 May 2023 Norwich residents will have their say on who represents them on Norwich City Council. One seat from each of the 13 wards will be up for election (13 of the 39 seats).

Following the election, there will be a change in leadership, as both leader and deputy leader made the announcement in October of 2022 that they would not be standing.

The count will be held on Friday 5 May at The Halls.

Turnout

For the last decade, or so, turnout fluctuates around mid-30%.

2019: 34.9%

2022: 36.1% [considerable variation ward-by-ward: from 25.2% in Mile Cross to 55.3% in Eaton]

Postal votes accounted for 37% of those cast in 2019. In 2022 it was 51%, believed to be a legacy from COVID. The proportion of people voting by post over polling station was higher in 8 of the 13 wards [63.5% in Bowthorpe to just below 40% in Nelson.]

Proxy votes - there were 66 in 2022.

It is anticipated that the figures for postal and proxy votes could increase in 2023 due to changes in legislation.

Context

National changes

Due to new legislation – **Elections Act 2022** – voters will be required from May, to show an [approved form of photo identification](#) to vote in a polling station.

People who do not have ID from the approved list, can apply for a [free Voter Authority Certificate, using the Gov.uk portal](#), which was launched on 16 January 2023.

The figures for how many people might not have the accepted photo ID are not known, with the government putting estimates across the whole of the UK at 2% (which in Norwich would be around 2,000 people), whereas other estimates have been 6-9%.

Political context

In Norwich, councillors are not in favour of the act, publicly voicing this most recently in [a motion passed at their meeting of council on 31 January 2023](#), in which they registered as “unnecessary” the changes to the administrative functions, and: “concern that the list of identification permitted to be used at polling stations is discriminatory towards young people.”

Target audiences

We will target audiences with tailored messages at different stages



Norwich residents



Councillors



Groups identified as less like to have photo ID



VCSE organisations and other stakeholders



Students registered to vote in Norwich (on campus and learning at home) - light touch

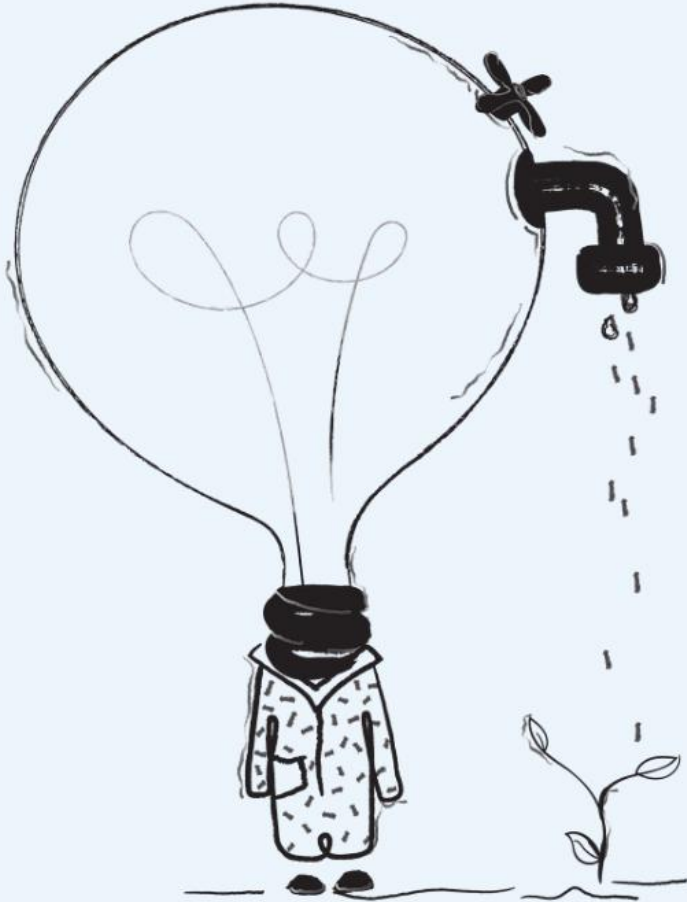


Local media



Colleagues

The strategy



We will work with a range of partners and stakeholders to find opportunities to promote democracy – the message that ‘your vote matters’ and makes a difference – and the different options for exercising that vote.

We will use a range of tools to reach our audiences, to ensure they understand the importance of voting and what they have to do to vote. We will need to take a flexible approach and be responsive to community needs, as the scale of people who might not have ID, or will need support applying is not known. Outreach work will be a critical factor.

There will be a focus where it is most likely that the new legal requirements for photo ID might not be known, or where the relevant ID is most likely not to be owned and there is a need for a Voter Authority Certificate.

We will monitor and evaluate how our messages land to help identify gaps and inform and target ongoing communications.

Key messages



Inform

- There is a range of ways you can vote
- Due to new rules introduced by government, if you want to vote at a polling station, you will have to present photo ID from an approved list.



Inspire

- Your vote matters
- Local elections shape your neighbourhood and community



Call to action

Don't miss out on your chance to vote

Stakeholders



Residents



VCSE and other community groups



Candidates, agents and political parties



Colleagues



Councillors



UEA/NUA to engage students



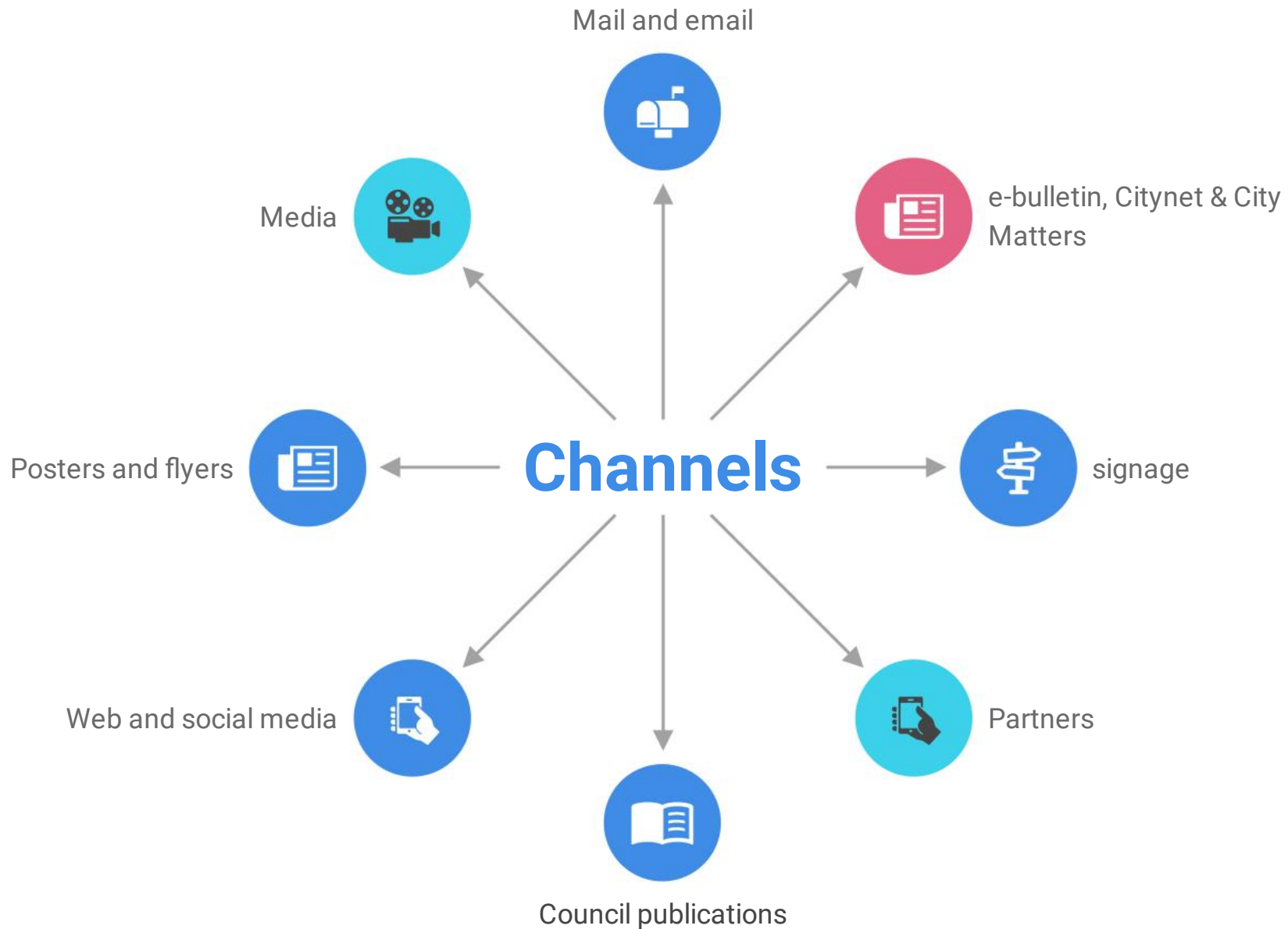
Other councils



Local media



DLUHC, Electoral Commission, AEA and Solace





Voter ID resources

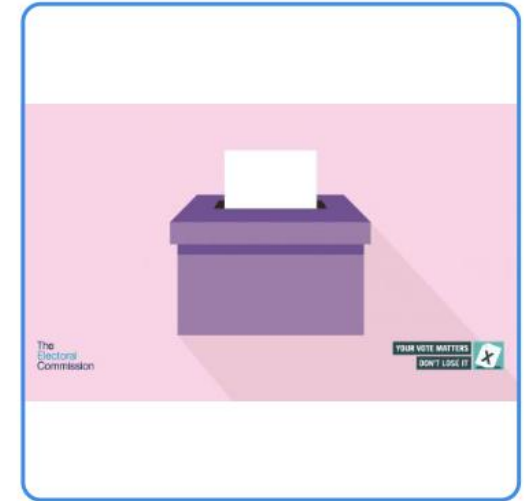
[Link to download](#)



Got 5?

Encouraging voter registration

[Link to download](#)



Voter info resource

Eg how/when/where to vote

[Link to download](#)

Campaign messaging

Norwich residents

- Mailout/email (council tax customers and housing tenants)
- Citizen magazine
- Social media
- Media
- Website
- Flyers - housing staff, community venues inc libraries
- Posters - housing blocks, community venues inc libraries
- Email signatures [TBC]

Colleagues

- City Matters
- Briefings
- e-bulletin
- CEO/director message

VCSE/stakeholders

- email
- Webinar
- Partner pack

Students

- new student mailout
- in-person visit [TBC]

Candidates, agents and political parties

- Signage

Key dates/milestones

March

- 27th Publication of notice of election
- 27th Poll cards sent
- **27th Pre-election period starts**
- 28th Nomination period start
- 30th Poll cards received

April

- 4th Deadline for nomination delivery & withdrawal (4pm)
- 5th Publication of statement of persons nominated (4pm)
- 17th Deadline: register to vote (11:59pm)
- 18th Deadline: postal vote
- 18th First postal vote dispatch (5pm)
- 25th Deadline: Voter Authority Certificate apps
- 25th Deadline: Proxy vote (5pm)
- 25th Publication of notice of poll (5pm)
- 26th Late postal vote dispatch
- 24th First day to apply for lost postal vote

May

- 4th Polling day
- 4th Deadline for emergency proxy apps (5pm)
- 4th Deadline for replacement for spoilt or lost postal votes (5pm)
- 4th Deadline for correcting clerical errors on the electoral register (9pm)
- 4th Ballot boxes signed in (from 10pm)
- 5th The count
- 5th Verification of ballots (from 10am)
- Count (approx 12pm)

January 2023

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16 Twitter & Facebook - Photo ID now needed	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26 City Matters - voter ID needed and date of pre-election period	27
30	31			

Communications actions

February 2023

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
		1	2	3
Home-page news item: date of election and voter ID ⁶	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	Web update ²¹	VCSE webinar ²²	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn how to vote & ID ²³	24
27	28			

Communications actions

March 2023

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
		e-bulletin: pre-election period ¹	2	3
Organising polling station signage ⁶	Request council partners signpost to info ⁷	Flyer with Council Tax bills ⁸	Flyers & posters to community groups, housing & libraries ⁹	10
Housing posters Citizen distributed Update web pages ¹³	News release: get ready for election ¹⁴	Partner pack Student push ¹⁵	16	17
20	21	City Matters: Intro by Tom ²²	23	24
e-bulletin: Pub of notice of election PRE-ELECTION PERIOD start ²⁷	28	Social media: Poll cards, still time to register ²⁹	30	31

Communications actions

April - week 1

Mon Apr 03



Tue Apr 04



Wed Apr 05

Contact higher ed and ask to support registration messaging



Thu Apr 06

Publication of nominations (4pm)

Social media

Fri Apr 07



April - week 2

Mon Apr 10

Web pages for verification & count

Media invite

Social media: deadline to register

News release: Your Vote Matters - why vote and key dates

Tue Apr 11

Count venue signage

Social media: deadline to apply for postal vote

Wed Apr 12

Social media: deadline to apply for Voter Authority Certificate

Thu Apr 13

Publication of nominations (4pm)

Fri Apr 14

April - week 3

Mon Apr 17

Deadline to register to vote (11:59pm)



Tue Apr 18

Deadline to apply for a postal vote (5pm)

Deadline to apply for Voter Authority Certificate

Wed Apr 19



Thu Apr 20



Fri Apr 21



April - week 4

Mon Apr 24

Count venue signage

Tue Apr 25

Deadline to apply for a proxy vote

Deadline to apply for Voter Authority Certificate (5pm)

Wed Apr 26

News release: 1 week to go, remember ID

Thu Apr 27

Social media: one week to go

Media name badges

Fri Apr 28

May - week 1

Mon May 01



Tue May 02



Wed May 03



Thu May 04

Polling day
7am-10pm polling hours
5pm deadline for emergency proxy
9pm deadline to correct clerical errors

Social media: go to the polls engaging posts

Fri May 05

The count

Social media: The results

Website: the results

In venue: results

Media handling



The results

Using the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) framework [see illustration], we will seek to work with internal colleagues to monitor and measure the results of our communications, throughout the campaign – so we can tailor according to need and demand/course adjust. We will evaluate what went well and what could be improved for future elections.

Monitoring and evaluation

