



# Scrutiny Committee

**20 July 2023**

# Scrutiny Request

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

# Overview

- The following elements of Elections Act 2022 have been implemented ahead of the Local Elections 2023:-
  - The requirement to show photo ID at polling stations
  - Free electoral identification documents called Voter Authority Certificates
  - Improving accessibility to polling stations for voters with disabilities

# Overview

- Electoral Portal went live January 2023 to issue Voter Authority Certificates
- Norwich City Council set up the following to respond to the new requirements
- Elections Project Group set up in the Autumn
- Key internal and external stakeholders trained from December 2022
- Comprehensive communication plan set out regarding the council's preparations for the introduction of Voter ID and was led by the communications team.
- Staffing retained at same levels as in elections in 2021 and 2022 (elections with Covid-19 safety measures)

# Norwich City Council Elections 2023

- 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.
- 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.

# Norwich City Council Elections 2023

- 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.
- There were 26 applications for VACs submitted on the deadline.
- There were no temporary VACs issued in Norwich and 5 emergency proxies issued to an elector not having photo ID on polling day

# Key stakeholder feedback

- Feedback was taken from Polling Station Staff and local party agents.
- Almost all polling stations reported examples of unfavourable views on the requirement to bring photo ID into polling stations from electors.
- Several presiding officers reported an increased number of incidents of anger or aggression to Norwich City Council elections staff.

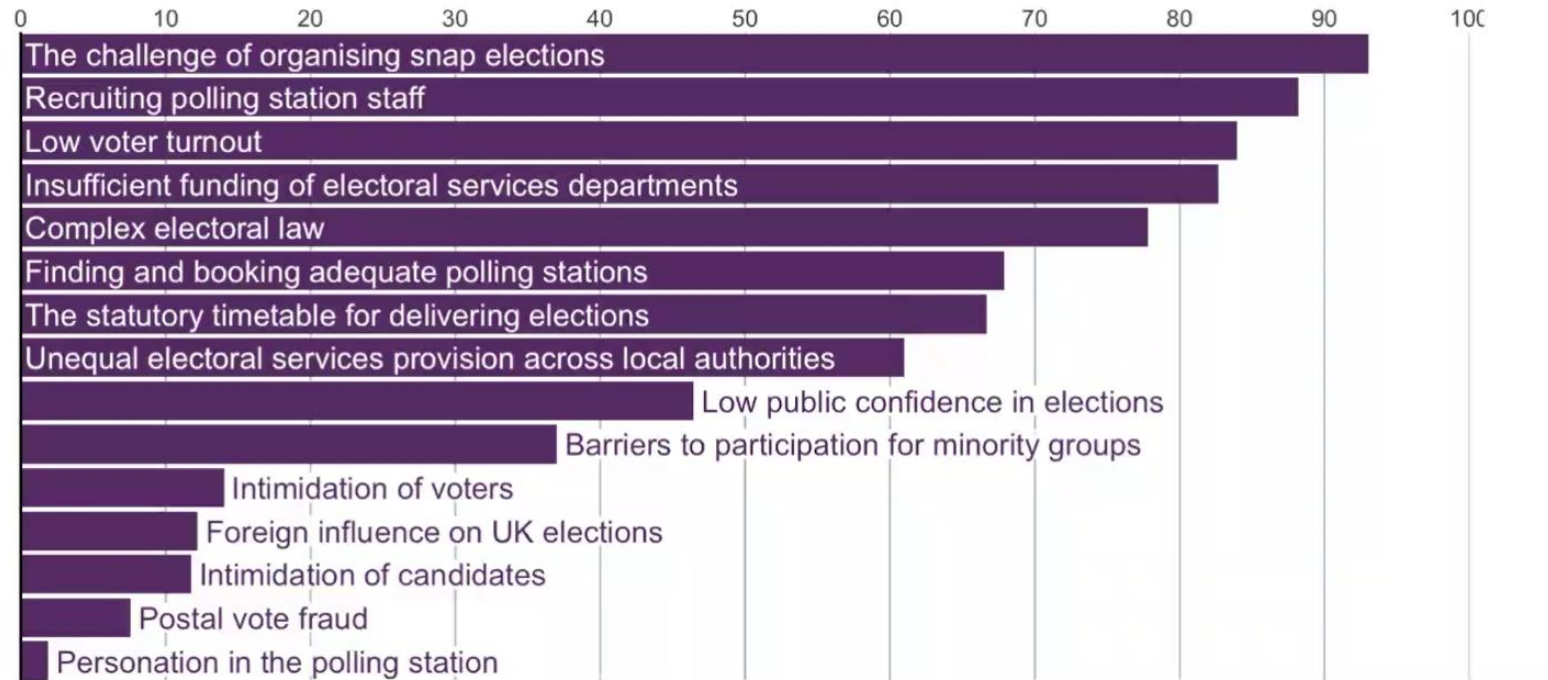
# Key stakeholder feedback

- The feedback from presiding officers on how Norwich City Council managed the process was largely positive, with 43 out of the 46 respondents not reporting any issues.
- The Electoral Commission completed detail report on the impact of Elections Act at a national level, including information on awareness, uptake on Voter Authority Certificates, number of individuals turned away and confidence in the process



# LGIU - electoral administrator feedback

- LGIU feedback on the main issues facing electoral administrators



# DLUHC/Birmingham CC visit on Polling Day

- Staff very aware and prepared and well trained for the introduction of Voter ID and elector questions
- Considerable number of electors registered their unhappiness about Voter ID with polling station staff, however this did not stop most people voting
- Good communication tools such as posters on display
- Lots of bus passes being used as ID

# Future Developments

Upcoming changes	Due	Notes
Electors will have the option to apply for a postal vote and proxy vote using the Gov.uk online portal	Oct 23	Still awaiting secondary legislation and technical requirements
All British citizens living overseas to be allowed to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK.	Jan 24	Still awaiting secondary legislation and technical requirements
Limit on the number of postal votes an individual can hand in at a polling station or council office.	May 24	Still awaiting secondary legislation and technical requirements
limit the number of people someone may act as proxy for	May 24	Still awaiting secondary legislation and technical requirements
Postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years	Jan 26	Update from DLUHC 13/7/23 – This was due to be implemented over three years; now all existing postal voters to start three-year cycle (including making new application) “by January 2026”