



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

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**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**
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To: All Council Leaders

www.gov.uk/dluhc

23rd March

Dear Council Leaders

Implementation of voter identification

I wanted to write to you all following the Secretary of State's recent rebalancing of Ministerial portfolios within the department, which has moved responsibility for elections from Minister Rowley to myself. This move, amongst others in the department, will ensure Ministers have balanced portfolios and the time and space to focus on the big delivery priorities – such as delivery of the Elections Act and the introduction of voter identification in Great Britain. As repeatedly emphasised by Government, we are committed to protecting the integrity of our democracy by removing the potential for current vulnerabilities to be exploited.

I know my predecessor, Minister Rowley, wrote to you last month to wish luck to those of you seeking re-election this May and to thank your electoral services teams for their continued hard work. Having served as a councillor for many years, I know the importance of all the work elections teams do and would like to echo these thanks. I am eager to continue Minister Rowley's close engagement with the sector, especially as we head towards the local elections in England this May and our first experience of the new voter identification requirements.

May's elections are now weeks away, and without doubt attention is on local authorities' preparations for polling day. Electoral services teams will be working tirelessly to prepare and deliver the new requirements and I am grateful for their ongoing commitment. I will work closely with the sector, providing support where appropriate, and continue to correspond with Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers to address their concerns.

I would like to recognise the continuing essential work being carried out, both by government and the sector, to ensure that the new requirements are delivered successfully and that the changes to elections are communicated effectively to electors whilst also, as ever, ensuring successful delivery of our polls.

You will be aware that the Government delivered the Voter Authority Certificate application service in January of this year, allowing electors to apply for a free Certificate and ensuring

all eligible electors continue to have the opportunity to vote in person at a polling station. The Service has been provided centrally by Government, including a central supplier to produce and deliver Certificates, thereby removing any burden there would be on electoral administrators if they were needing to process and produce Certificates themselves. The Government continues to provide guidance, training and technical support to local authorities to support their use of the service, and continues to enhance the functionality to improve administrators experience of the service.

To ensure the changes are widely known and understood, the Electoral Commission's national communications campaign launched in January, to raise awareness of the new requirements among the public, supporting them with any actions they may need to take. We have bolstered the Commission's campaign, sharing the messages through our own channels including social media, with stakeholders, and on multiple GOV.UK pages.

The Commission has also provided resources for use by local councils to assist in your own local awareness raising, and information on the new voter identification requirements will be included on all Poll Cards sent to every voter ahead of an election, ensuring every elector receives the necessary information in a timely manner.

The Commission recently conducted a mid-campaign review which has shown increasing public awareness of voter identification since the campaign launched in early January, with awareness now sitting at 63% of the electorate (up from 22%). This is reassuring, and there is time still before the polls in May for awareness to continue to improve, but we shall not be complacent – this is both a new process and a very complex message to convey and the Government will continue to support the EC's campaign to ensure maximum reach and cut through with electors. I am confident that local authorities will be doing the same, indeed I am aware of some of the excellent work already taking place in some areas. I would like to reiterate the vital importance of you and your teams continuing to engage with your local electorate to ensure the message is received and understood by voters.

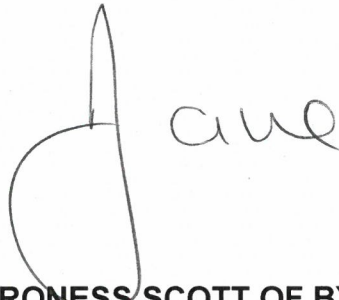
The Government has been clear that local authorities will be appropriately resourced to ensure they can deliver this change and others arising from the Act, whilst also continuing to deliver robust and secure elections, as they always do. New Burdens funding to support the implementation of voter identification and accessibility measures is already being provided to local authorities, an extra £4.75m was provided to local authorities with elections this May for local engagement with electors.

We have been hearing from Returning Officers, local authority Chief Executives and Electoral Services Managers about resource pressures in some local authorities, and their concerns around the potential impact on and mitigations for polls. We recognise the unique challenge of implementing voter identification for the first time this May and consequently the Government will be providing an additional, one-off implementation grant of £700k for local authorities with polls in May. This is a non-ringfenced grant paid alongside the wider New Burdens grant in April, which Returning Officers may use at their discretion. For local authorities who do not have polls this May, and who will therefore be implementing voter identification for the first time in 2024, they will receive this additional implementation grant –

a further £500k - ahead of the May 2024 polls. The Government understands that local authorities and their elected representatives best understand the local needs for delivery: it is therefore up to you to use this funding appropriately.

Council leaders are key to ensuring that the entire council supports the implementation of the changes to our elections, and delivery of the upcoming polls. Your understanding of your electorate, electoral services teams and entire council will ensure electors have what they need to continue to vote while we all work together to deliver a safer, more secure democracy.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dane'.

BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK

