

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 12 SEPTEMBER 2022

PART I – NOT DELEGATED

7. ELECTIONS VOTER ID (CED)

1 Summary

- 1.1 It is expected that following approval of further legislation on the detail, Voter ID will come in to effect from May 2023 elections.
- 1.2 The Elections Act 2022 will require voters in Great Britain to show photographic identification before being issued a ballot paper in polling stations. Failure to show ID will prevent a voter from voting.
- 1.3 To implement this change there are two realistic options available to the council:
 - 1.3.1 The use of Modern Polling, a Government Digital Services approved electronic platform for voter check in and reports provided by Modern Democracy Ltd.
 - 1.3.2 A paper based check-in to check and record voters' ID.
- 1.4 The Government is not expected to provide the full details of the guidance on Voter ID until at least January 2023, by which time it will be too late for the Council to implement the Modern Polling solution, therefore a decision is required now as to whether the Council is to implement the Modern Polling solution or the paper based option.
- 1.5 Both options will require additional budget. Modern Polling circa. £28,400 per year, paper based solution circa. £11,400 per year.
- 1.6 The Modern Polling solution will also require additional ICT support and internal support from the CSC to our Elections team.

2 Details

- 2.1 Voter ID requirements will take effect for elections in May 2023. Guidance from Government is unlikely to be released until at least January 2023.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that several types of photographic ID will be acceptable and free voter ID will be made available for those without any other form of photographic ID.
- 2.3 Voter ID is designed to prevent 'personation', the electoral offence of pretending to be someone else when you vote. The Government acknowledges levels of fraud are low but argues that every ballot matters, and that Voter ID will protect voters from having their vote stolen.
- 2.4 It is unknown at this stage what reporting requirements will be placed on the Council but it is expected that there will be some surrounding those voters unable to vote due to the implementation of Voter ID.
- 2.5 It is believed there are two realistic options available to the Council for how we can implement Voter ID set out below.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 Option A – Modern Polling

- 3.1.1 Modern Polling transforms the management of polling stations, providing the tools necessary to operate efficiently and enhance the voter experience.
- 3.1.2 Modern Polling gives secure access to the electronic register, instantly providing polling staff with voter information on-screen, marks the register, facilitates the production of the corresponding number list and the ballot paper account.
- 3.1.3 The voter check-in system provides a faster check-in for the voter. There is also a section for recording the ID that voters use but also records those not permitted to vote due to not having ID with them. Should that voter return with ID the system notes that they have returned and the ID used.
- 3.1.4 The use of Modern Polling removes the ability for polling staff to make errors on the register, Corresponding Numbers List and Ballot Paper Account.
- 3.1.5 Should a voter arrive at the incorrect polling station, the system will detail what station the voter is registered to vote, provided this is within the Council area.
- 3.1.6 The reporting tool allows the user to instantly generate all post-elections reports. Replacing the traditional paper-based reports with electronic.
- 3.1.7 The use of Modern Polling is approved by Government Digital Services.
- 3.1.8 Apple iPads are used at the polling stations as they provide the highest level of security across all devices. All devices are Wi-Fi and mobile internet enabled. The platform is also operational offline. However, as a minimum, the iPad must be connected to the internet for the start and close of poll, this can be done away from the polling station if necessary.
- 3.1.9 As long as the iPad remains connected to the internet, it provides real time analytics on the turnout and station status throughout the day. Real time stats provide overall turnout, individual polling station turnout, footfall, and reports on the number of voters who have presented at the wrong polling station. Should the internet be intermittent, then the updates will be sent through to the office each time the device connects to the internet.
- 3.1.10 It should be noted that if Modern Polling be implemented, this will place additional demands on the Elections and ICT teams. A full project plan will be developed and implemented. This will include the need for connectivity checks in all polling stations.
- 3.1.11 The system for recording voter ID works off-line (without internet connection), but live updates for reporting requires internet access.
- 3.1.12 Following discussions with Procurement, it has been established that although Modern Polling are available on G-Cloud Government framework, a better deal can be obtained through a four-year contract direct. Procurement have confirmed that this can be obtained through an exemption.

3.2 Option B – Paper based

- 3.2.1 It is important to bear in mind that Voter ID can be implemented without Modern Polling by continuing to use the tried and tested method of polling as used over many years.

- 3.2.2 The full details of reporting requirements have not yet been made clear in the act. Any reporting would need to be paper based, the format still to be decided. This could be a second register of electors being marked indicating electors without the required ID. The option of lists to record these details could also be used. Whichever form is used, it would be vital for this to be completed throughout the day by polling staff.
- 3.2.3 There would also be additional work for the Elections team as it would be necessary to transfer the results from the poll onto the online Government reporting tool, as well as providing reports for Councillors.
- 3.2.4 At this point in time it is not clear what assistance the Electoral Commission will provide to assist with recording and reporting.
- 3.2.5 Due to an increasing reliance on polling staff to remember to complete paper forms this does carry risk that some could be forgotten and missed from recording.

3.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.3.1 Officers recommend that Option 1 – implementing the Modern Polling solution is approved as this is expected to reduce the risk of human error and improve the efficiency of the voting process and reporting function. The additional costs represent good use of council funds due to the importance and profile of the election process.
- 3.3.2 As guidance on the implementation of Voter ID will not be issued until next year it is felt prudent that a decision should be made now to allow Modern Polling to be implemented if this is the route the Council wishes to take. Should a decision be delayed until the guidance is released it will be too late to consider option 1.
- 3.3.3 Although implementing Voter ID is possible by using traditional paper solutions, it is believed it will be made much easier and efficient using Modern Polling.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council’s agreed policy and budgets.
- 4.2 Up to an additional £28,400 budget (less the New Burdens payment in the 2023/24) will need to be allocated to the Elections budget.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 It is anticipated that over time, the use of Modern Polling would save on resourcing in the polling station, but this would not be realised until Modern Polling has been tried and tested with the Council a number of times.
- 5.2 Should the Council sign up to a four year contract with Modern Polling this will come at a cost of £28,400 per year, this includes an annual licence fee and the rental of 67 iPads for the election period.
- 5.3 The breakdown of the costs are below:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
	2023	2024	2025	2026	

Annual licence fee	£6,950	£6,950	£6,950	£6,950	£27,800
Polling station licence fee (£200 each)	£11,400	£11,400	£11,400	£11,400	£45,600
IPad fee (£150 each)	£10,050	£10,050	£10,050	£10,050	£40,200
Total	£28,400	£28,400	£28,400	£28,400	£113,600

5.4 The paper based process will require the need for an additional Poll Clerk at each Polling Station which on current fees of £200 per Poll Clerk amounts to £11,400.

5.5 Therefore the cost for comparison between Modern Polling and paper based solution is circa. £17,000 additional cost for Modern Polling.

5.6 It is not known at this stage how much the Council will receive, however, it has been confirmed that New Burdens money will be provided by the Government for the implementation of Voter ID that will off-set some (but not all) of the additional costs in the first year.

6 Legal, Equal Opportunities, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

6.1 None specific.

7 Staffing Implications

7.1 The paper based solution would require an additional Poll Clerk at each Polling Station.

7.2 The Modern Polling solution would require additional ICT support, and administration and logistical support from the CSC.

8 Communications and Website Implications

8.1 The use of Modern Polling or paper based recording will not have a direct impact on voters, as the system relates to the way Poll Clerks will record voter's information, however there will need to be clear communications to voters that they will be required to bring ID if voting in a polling station.

9 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

9.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

9.2 Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within the Elections Service plan.

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	Risk Rating <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Security of data on the Modern Polling system	Data breach, loss of data	System is approved by Government digital services IT Health Check compliant	tolerate	4
Internet connection failure	Impact on live updates	IPads are wifi and cellular and include o2 sim cards The system itself operates offline	tolerate	2
Device or Modern Polling system failure	Unable to record data on system	Small number of spare devices that can be delivered if necessary Full paper recording back up prepared	tolerate	4
Accuracy of records and human error from a manual paper based system	Breach of compliance	Implement digital Modern Polling solution	terminate	6

9.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

Likelihood	Low	High	Very High	Very High
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	4	8	12	16
	Low 3	Medium 6	High 9	Very High 12
	Low 2	Low 4	Medium 6	High 8
	Low 1	Low 2	Low 3	Low 4
	Impact			
	Low -----> Unacceptable			

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)

3 (Critical)

2 (Significant)

1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))

3 (Likely (21-79%))

2 (Unlikely (6-20%))

1 (Remote (≤5%))

9.4 In the officers’ opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

10 Recommendation

10.1 That Policy & Resources Committee recommends Option 1 the implementation of Modern Polling.

10.2 That Policy & Resources Committee recommend to Council that the annual Elections budget is increased by £28,400 to cover the costs of Modern Polling.

Report prepared by:

Josh Sills – Head of Customer Experience

Kimberley Grout – Executive Head of Services

Julie Prestidge – Elections Consultant

Data Quality

Data sources:

Modern Democracy – provider of Modern Polling

Data checked by:

Sally Riley – Finance Business Partner

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	X
3	High	

Background Papers

N/A

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable.