



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Full Council

Thursday 2 March 2023

Designation of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers

Lead Director:	David Sidaway - Chief Executive
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Full Council – 2 March 2023

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

- 1.1 It is recommended that Full Council approves the designation of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers as set out in section 4 of this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to ensure that there are sufficient officers designated as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers to enable the elections team to respond to the requirements of the Elections Act 2022.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 In 2022, parliament passed the Elections Act 2022 which imposed additional requirements in respect of the conduct of elections in the UK. One of those changes is the requirement for every elector who votes in person at a polling station to provide photographic identification before being issued with a ballot

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paper. This photographic identification must be of a type approved by government.

- 3.2 The approved list of acceptable photographic identity documents is attached at **Appendix A**.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 Those who do not own an approved form of photographic identification can apply, free of charge, for a 'Voter Authority Certificate'. This is a certificate issued by the Electoral Registration Officer. In circumstances where an elector's Voter Authority Certificate has been damaged/destroyed, delayed in the post or lost, the Electoral Registration Officer can issue a 'temporary Voter Authority Certificate' if an application for one is received by 5pm 25 April 2023 (for elections on May 4 2023).

- 4.2 A temporary Voter Authority Certificate must contain a wet ink signature from the Electoral Registration Officer (the ERO). At Telford & Wrekin, the ERO is the Chief Executive. Like many authorities, this Council has historically not appointed deputy EROs. Given the need to process temporary Voter Authority Certificates promptly and the potential for the EROs diary commitments to make this difficult, it is proposed that Council designates 4 deputy EROs. Those proposed are:-

Director: Finance & HR – Ken Clarke;

Director: Policy & Governance – Anthea Lowe;

Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy – Richard Phillips; and

Elections Team Leader – Phil Griffiths.

- 4.3 This will provide sufficient flexibility within the Council to ensure that temporary Voter Authority Certificates are processed as expeditiously as possible.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Whilst it is open to Council not to approve the proposals contained within this report, this is not recommended as it will potentially lead to challenges in issuing temporary Voter Authority Certificates during periods of unavailability on the part of the ERO, such as during annual leave periods.

- 5.2 Council could also decide to designate alternative individuals as deputy EROs – those proposed already have elections responsibilities and experience and, therefore, the proposals contained within this report are a natural extension of those responsibilities.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 The key risk associated with the proposals contained within this report is that the ERO does not maintain control over the issue of all temporary Voter Authority Certificates. However, this risk is mitigated by the fact that there is a statutory process to follow when issuing these certificates, that those designated as deputy EROs are experienced in elections-related matters and there will be an agreed internal checklist to follow when carrying out this function.

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7.0 Council Priorities

7.1 The proposals contained within this report relate to the Council's ambition to be a community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 The proposals to appoint Deputy ERO's to support the processing of temporary Voter Authority Certificates will not result in any additional costs to the Council.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 The proposals contained within this report are directly linked to legislative changes introduced as a result of the Elections Act 2022 which introduced the requirement for voter ID when an individual wishes to vote in person at a polling station.

9.2 Under section 8 Representation of the People Act 1983, it is the responsibility of Council to appoint Electoral Registration Officers. Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, this responsibility cannot be undertaken by Cabinet.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 The proposals contained in this report affect residents in every ward although it is anticipated that only a very small number of electors within the Borough will require a temporary Voter Authority Certificate.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are some groups who are considered to be disproportionately affected by the requirement to provide photographic identification; these groups are those who have no need for, or are unable to easily afford, one of the documents listed in Appendix A.

11.2 The provision of a Voter Authority Certificate (temporary or permanent) is intended to address this issue. The proposals contained in this report are designed to make it as easy as possible for a resident to obtain a temporary Voter Authority Certificate enabling them to vote and thus preventing them from being disenfranchised.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 The Equality & Diversity implications are similar to those set out in section 11 above in so much as some socio-economic groups are less likely to own one of the documents approved for use as photographic identification for election purposes. Similarly, some people the age demographic where they are soon to turn 18, and those in the older age demographic may be less likely to own appropriate documentation. Again, the proposals contained in this report are

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intended to reduce disenfranchisement for these groups by making it as easy as possible for them to obtain a temporary certificate.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There is a carbon impact arising from the need to issue hard copy certificates to voters. However, this is prescribed in law and is outside of the authority's control.

14.0 Background Papers

N/A

15.0 Appendices

A List of Approved Photographic Identification documents

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Finance	20/02/2023	20/02/2023	MLB
Legal	20/02/2023	20/02/2023	EH
Exec Director	20/02/2023	21/02/2023	DS