

Salford City Council

Elections Act: Voter Identification

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Elections Act

Polls impacted:

- UK Parliamentary elections
- Local elections and Mayoral referendums

Main Focuses of the Act:

- Voter ID
- Accessibility
- Postal Voting Changes
- EU Citizens Voting Rights
- Changes to the Overseas Elector Franchise

Voter Identification

- Voters will have to show an approved form of photo identification before voting in a polling station
- A free Voter Authority Certificate will be available from the Electoral Registration Officer for those without an existing form of ID – they will be able to apply for this online or in person.
The application will require a photo of the elector, along with their name, address, National Insurance Number [if no NiNo, 3 supporting documents]. The ID will be distributed by the Government from a central location, but the Elections Team will need to verify each individual application.
The deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate will be 6 days before polling day.
- The Voter Authority Certificate online portal application service is due to start mid-January 2023.
- Voter ID requirements will be in place at elections taking place from May 2023

Accepted forms of Identification

- Passport
- Drivers Licence [including provisional]
- Biometric residence permit
- PASS accredited cards – Some student cards
- Ministry of Defence Form 90
- A national identity card issued by an EEA state
- Some Concessionary Travel Passes: Older Person's Bus Pass, Disabled Person's Bus Pass, Oyster 60+ Card, Freedom Pass
- A badge of a form prescribed under section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

Voter Authority Certificates

This will be an A4 paper document, intended to last a voter 10 years.

There will also be a Temporary Voter Authority Certificate which we will be able to issue if somebody applied for one before the deadline but did not receive it in time.

Anonymous voters will need to apply for an Anonymous Elector Document. This will need to be renewed yearly. It will have their photo and elector number, but no name. They will also need to take their poll card with them to vote.

An Emergency Proxy will be available for people who have had their ID documents lost, destroyed or stolen from the deadline to 5pm polling day.

Accessibility

- ROs will have a general responsibility to take all reasonable steps to support voters with disabilities
- The provisions for voters to be assisted by a companion will be extended to allow anyone over the age of 18 to assist
- Electoral Commission to produce guidance and recommendations of support that should be made available.
- AGMA approach to be taken to ensure consistency across polling stations.
- Government to meet costs of new burdens, including purchase of new equipment, as necessary.

Postal Voting

- Political parties and campaigners will be banned from handling postal votes.
- Limit on the number of postal votes a voter can hand in at a polling station; their own plus 5 others – both of these expected for May 2024 polls.
- Postal voters will need to make a fresh application every 3 years, instead of the 5-yearly signature refresh – starting January 2024
- Postal Vote Applications will require the electors NiNo or supporting documents for identity verification. Will be able to apply for a postal vote via the online portal [paper applications still available] – expected August 2023

EU Citizens Voting and Candidacy Rights

- Automatic right of EU citizens to register to vote, to vote and to stand in UK elections will be removed,
 - with the exception of ‘qualifying EU citizens’ and ‘EU citizens with retained rights’ – that is, citizens of a country with bilateral treaties, or those resident since 31 Dec 2020.
- Will not affect Irish, Maltese and Cypriot citizens
- Changes expected for May 2025 polls, more details August 2023.

Overseas Electors

- The 15-year limit on voting rights for British citizens living overseas will be removed
- Overseas electors will be able to register at an address where they were previously registered, or if they were never registered, where they were last resident
- Estimated 2.1- 2.5 million British citizens overseas could be newly enfranchised: no definitive figures on likely numbers who will register, but impact assessment considers scenario for 550k additional voters.
- Changes expected to begin 2023/24

Public Awareness

- National communications campaign for voter identification to be delivered by the Electoral Commission, including outreach support and roll-out via partners, to **go live in January 2023**, with support for key groups who may need assistance.
- No funding for local comms is expected. Working with AGMA on GM approach. Cannot commence before the online portal is live in January.
- All necessary Voter ID information will be supplied on the new A4 poll card.

Salford preparation

- Collaboration across GM, continued discussion with Electoral Commission, SOLACE, LGA
- Returning Officer responsibility
- Cross council squad in place to ensure effective local implementation – directly accountable to Returning Officer
- Communication and public awareness will be key