

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 November 2022</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Elections Act 2022</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Ian Fitzpatrick, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer</b>
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	<b>Councillor Chris Collier, Cabinet member for performance and people</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>This report provides members with an overview of the Elections Act 2022.</b>
<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<p><b>(1) To note this report and the actions taken to date and planned to mitigate the risks involved with late implementation of secondary legislation made under powers conferred by the Elections Act 2022</b></p> <p><b>(2) To agree that copies of the report be circulated to all members and parish councils for information to make them aware of the Act and its provisions</b></p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>The Elections Act 2022 introduces changes that will affect electors, candidates, and the administration of all elections in England (some other elections in the UK).</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	<b>Name: Tracey Pannett</b> <b>Post title: Head of Elections and Local Land Charges</b> <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Tracey.Pannett@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk">Tracey.Pannett@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk</a></b> <b>Telephone number: 01323 415074</b>

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## **1 Introduction**

1.1 At its meeting on the 23 November 2020, Lewes Full Council passed the following notice of motion.

“We call on the Council to request that legal officers produce a report to Cabinet detailing the implications of Voter ID on residents in the district once the draft legislation and guidance for Voter ID has been published with the aim of identifying the mitigations that could be practically implemented to prevent the loss on any individual’s democratic right and ensure that elections within Lewes District are free for all once the legislation comes into force”

- 1.2 The Elections Act 2022 (the Act) received Royal Assent on 28 April 2022. Government responsibility for the Act sits within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 1.3 Much of the details of the Act will be contained in secondary legislation that is expected to be laid before Parliament from July 2022 onwards.
- 1.4 Implementation of the Act is expected to be phased over the next 18 months or so – with some measures due to take effect in time for the May 2023 local elections. Other measures are expected to be introduced in the Summer/Autumn of 2023 in readiness for the 2024 Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and the next Parliamentary General Election which must be held by 28 January 2025.
- 1.5 A synopsis of the Act is attached as Appendix A.

## **2 Analysis**

### **The Act will: -**

- 2.1 Require voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued. (May 2023)
- 2.2 Require Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) based in local authorities to issue free electoral identity documents to those without a valid form of Photo ID. (May 2023)
- 2.3 Require postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years. (July 2023).
- 2.4 Restrict the handling of postal votes, including limiting the number of postal votes an individual can hand in at a polling station. (After May 2023).
- 2.5 Further limit the number of people someone may act as proxy for. (After May 2023).
- 2.6 Extend accessibility to elections including requiring Returning Officers to take all reasonable steps to provide support for those with a disability in polling stations. (May 2023)
- 2.7 Simplify and clarify the offence of undue influence. (Late 2023)
- 2.8 Change the voting and candidacy arrangements for EU voters. (June 2023)
- 2.9 Allow all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections, regardless of when they left the UK. (July 2023).
- 2.10 The government has acknowledged that the Act will result in a new financial burden being placed on local authorities. These costs will initially be covered in

line with new burden principles, but it is not currently known what that funding will look like.

2.11 The provisions contained within the Act will apply at:

- a) UK Parliamentary Elections in Great Britain
- b) Local elections and referendums in England; and
- c) Police and Crime Commission elections in England and Wales

2.12 Currently, the provisions within the Act will not apply to local elections in Scotland or Wales or Scottish Parliamentary or Senedd elections. This is likely to lead to elector confusion and considerable administrative complexities for Welsh and Scottish authorities. That is in addition to the extra complexities that will apply to English elections.

### **3 Voter Identification**

3.1 Electors will be required to identify themselves by showing an approved form of photographic identification before casting their vote in a polling station.

Legislation defines the list of acceptable documentation which includes:

- a) A United Kingdom passport or a passport issued by an EEA state or a Commonwealth country
- b) A driving licence issued under the Road Traffic Act 1988.
- c) A biometric immigration document issued in accordance with section 5 of the UK Borders Act 2007.
- d) An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram a) (PASS card).
- e) A Ministry of Defence Form 90
- f) Concessionary travel passes funded by the UK Government (e.g., Older Person's Bus Pass, Disabled Person's Bus Pass).
- g) An electoral identity document issued under the Act – a Voter Card. For electors who do not have an accepted form of photographic identification, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) will be required to provide an Electoral Identity document – a photographic identification document free of charge for the purposes of voting in polling stations. Government research indicates that 2% of the electorate will require an Electoral Identity document issued by the ERO – for Lewes this equates to approximately 1,500 electors. The deadline for a voter to apply for a Voter Card is expected to be 5pm on the day -6 before polling day.

3.2 It is expected that voter identification will be in place for polls held in spring 2023 onwards, with electors able to apply for an Electoral Identity document from January 2023.

3.3 Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities has indicated the current timeline for laying the secondary legislation – 6 November 2022 – Into effect – Mid January 2023 – to be applied on 4 May 2023 polls. The Gov.Uk online application service will go live in January 2023.

The Electoral Commission will run the national public communications campaign to raise awareness of the requirement to show identification and remind the public to bring their identification with them when they vote; and Support those without eligible identification to understand how and when they can apply for an electoral identity document. Information will also be included on the new A4 style Poll Card.

- 3.4 Communications: To note that DLUHC have confirmed that there will not be any new burdens funding given for communications. This is a concern as we do not have a communications budget. We will of course use any communication tools that the Electoral Commission provide and will work with the councils' communications teams to make use of social media resources. Please See Appendix A for some communication proposals but they will all have a cost implication.

## **4 Accessibility**

- 4.1 a) Returning Officers (ROs) will have a general responsibility to take all reasonable steps to support voters with disabilities.

b) Anyone over the age of 18 will be able to act as a companion to assist a disabled voter in a polling station.

- 4.2 The Electoral Commission are expected to provide guidance to help determine what equipment and staff are required for specific polling stations. Guidance will also be sought from the Council's Equality Officer, and any external contacts and groups.

- 4.3 It is expected that this provision will take effect from the May 2023 elections.

## **5 Absent Voting (Postal and Proxy Voting)**

- 5.1 There are several changes that will affect absent voting – postal and Proxy votes:

- a) Political parties and campaigners will be banned from handling postal votes. Returning Officers will be required to act on reports of breaches, as necessary, which could include reporting the matter to the police.
- b) There will be a limit on the number of postal votes that a person can hand in at polling stations. If a person hands in more than the permitted number of postal votes, they will all be rejected and excluded from the count. Electoral Registration Officers will then be required to notify postal voters whose vote has been rejected under these rules.
- c) Postal voters will need to make a refresh application every 3 years (instead of the currently 5-yearly signature refresh).
- d) Electors will only be allowed to act a proxy for up to 4 people, of which no more than 2 can be 'domestic electors' (i.e., not overseas or service electors)
- e) Applications will require identity verification. An online absent application service will also be introduced to allow electors to apply for a postal or proxy vote online. It is expected that the identity verification requirements

will be like registration applications, whereby an applicant must provide their National Insurance Number that is matched against Department of Work and Pensions. Applicants will continue to be required to supply their personal identifiers (date of birth and a handwritten signature) as part of their application, to be matched against the postal vote statement that accompanies the ballot paper. It is expected that users of the online system will be required to take a picture of their signature and upload it to the online service. Electors will still be able to apply for absent votes using paper forms, but the same verification process will apply.

f) Secrecy requirements will be extended to postal and proxy votes.

## **6 EU Citizens; Voting and Candidacy Rights (EUVCR)**

6.1 The automatic right of European citizens ('relevant citizens of the union') to register, to vote and to stand in UK elections which use the local election franchise, and which remain the responsibility of the UK Parliament, will be removed.

6.2 Two groups of EU citizens will retain their voting and candidacy rights – and therefore remain on the relevant register:

a.) 'Qualifying EU citizens' that is citizens of a country included in Schedule 6A of the Act, and who hold any form of leave to remain or do require such leave. Schedule 6A is a list of the countries with which the UK has bilateral voting and candidacy rights treaties. Currently the UK has such treaties with Poland, Spain, Portugal, and Luxembourg; however, it is feasible that other countries will be added to this list.

b.) 'EU citizens with retained rights' that is those persons who were already resident in the UK at the end of the Implementation Period following the UK exit from the EU (31 December 2020). Such persons are also required to have maintained lawful immigration status.

6.3 All EU citizens on the electoral register will therefore need to have their eligibility reviewed, with those being determined to have become ineligible being removed from the electoral registration. There are currently approximately 1,700 EU citizens on the Lewes electoral register.

6.4 EU citizens elected to office before the measures in the Act come into force can remain in office for their full term, irrespective of immigration status, and irrespective of whether they qualify under the new eligibility criteria. For EU citizens elected after these measures come into force, the Act provides that the individual must have leave to enter or remain, or not require such leave.

6.5 It is expected that EROs will need to start reviewing existing EU electors and process applications in line with the new eligibility criteria from June 2023. The measures are expected to take effect from the May 2023 elections.

## 7 Overseas Electors

- 7.1 The 15-year limit on expatriates' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections will be removed and British citizens who were previously registered or resident in the UK will be enfranchised.
- 7.2 Those enfranchised will be entitled to register in respect of the last UK address at which they were registered, or, if they were never registered, the last UK address at which they were resident.
- 7.3 The registration period for overseas electors will be extended from one year up to three years. Electors will be able to reapply or refresh their absent vote arrangements at the same time as renewing their overseas declaration. Renewals will be linked to a fixed point of 1 November.
- 7.4 It is expected that the numbers of overseas electors will increase by approximately 300% and that this provision will be introduced ahead of polls held in spring 2024.
- 7.5 The verification process to check an applicant's eligibility is not yet determined but is likely to include:
- a.) EROs checking past copies of the electoral register
  - b.) Where this is not possible, via documentary evidence, or on a discretionary basis, via EROs checking local records; or
  - c.) Where none of the above is possible, via an attestation from another registered elector.
- 7.6 Registration of overseas electors tends to be event led, i.e., once a UK Parliamentary election has been called. There is considerable concern amongst the electoral community about the impact on resources the processing of overseas registrations will have, particularly on days -12 (registration deadline) and -11 (postal vote deadline) before polling day for a UK Parliamentary election.

## 8 Other measures

- 8.1 **First Past the Post:** The voting system for all Combined Authority Mayors, the Mayor of London, and Local Authority Mayors in England, and for all Police and Crime Commissioner Elections in England and Wales will be changed from the Supplementary Vote System to the Simple Majority Voting System (First Past the Post). It is expected that this will be introduced from such polls take place in May 2023 onwards.
- 8.2 **Undue Influence:** The Act seeks to clarify the activities that constitute undue influence in order to make the legislation easier to interpret and enforce. The Act revises Section 114A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and makes it clear that the following activities constitute undue influence, when carried out for the purposes of forcing a person to vote in a particular way, forcing them not to vote at all, or otherwise interfering with their free exercise of the franchise:

- a.) The use or threat of physical violence
- b.) Damage or destruction to property (or threat of such damage or destruction)
- c.) Reputational damage (or threat of such damage)
- d.) Causing or threatening to cause financial use
- e.) Causing spiritual injury or exerting undue spiritual pressure
- f.) Any other act or omission designed to intimidate a person and not covered in a. to e.
- g.) Any act or omission designed to deceive a person in relation to the administration of an election.

8.3 **Electoral Commission:** The Act makes provision for a power to designate a Strategy and Policy Statement, which will be drafted by Parliament and subject to Parliamentary approval. The Electoral Commission must have regard to it in the exercise of its functions. The Act also amends the functions of the Speaker's Committee to enhance the Electoral Commission's accountability to Parliament.

8.4 **Intimidation – New Electoral Sanction:** The Act introduces a new electoral sanction in the form of a disqualification order, which is intended to provide additional protection to those who participate in elections and contribute to the political debate and deter individuals from carrying out acts of intimidation.

8.5 **Digital Imprints:** The Act introduces a new digital imprint regime requiring anyone paying for digital political material to be advertised, to explicitly show who they are, and on whose behalf, they are promoting the material. Certain campaigners (registered political parties, candidates, future candidates, recognised third-party campaigners, referendum campaigners, holders of elected office and recall petition campaigners) are also required to include an imprint on their other electronic material if it constitutes digital elections, referendum or recall petition material. Other electronic material is material which meets the purpose and promoter (or the person on behalf of whom) conditions and where no payment is made for the material to be published as an advertisement.

## 9 Conclusion

9.1 The Elections Act 2022 introduces major changes into UK elections. It aims to ensure the UK elections remain secure, fair, modern, inclusive, and transparent. It allows the Government to meet some of its 2019 manifesto commitments, including to “protect the integrity of our democracy, by introducing identification to vote at polling stations, stopping postal vote harvesting, and measures to prevent any foreign interference in elections”.

9.2 It is a far-reaching Act that will affect all those involved in the electoral process – voters, candidates, campaigners, political parties, suppliers, administrators, EROs Ros.

9.3 The measures contained in the Act are due to be implemented over a period – further details are contained in Appendix A. The timescales for implementation are ambitious, particularly in the light that no (draft) secondary legislation is available yet. There are concerns amongst the electoral sector (EROs, ROs,

administrators, suppliers, and the Association of Electoral Administrators etc) on the impact resources and systems given the lack of secondary legislation and adequate time to plan and implement the charges.

## **10 Financial appraisal**

The additional cost pressures indicated within the report (Appendix A) are noted, and Members should be aware that as this is an ongoing pressure, further reductions/savings might be required unless the Government fully funds the ongoing costs associated with the measures. There is a “new burdens” agreement between Central and Local Government whereby the Government promise to fully fund additional burdens on the sector because of these changes. It is not yet known how much this will be. It is expected that an Impact Assessment with cost estimated will be published on introduction of the secondary legislation to Parliament.

## **11 Legal implications**

The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Returning Officer (RO) has a personal duty to conduct elections and the electoral registration process in accordance with appropriate legislation in place at the time.

When the appropriate secondary legislation made under the Elections Act 2022 is issued and brought into force, the Council’s lawyers will, if instructed, advise the ERO and RO on its meaning and practical application.

*Date of legal advice: 14.09.22*

*Legal ref: 011391*

## **12 Risk management implications**

Please Appendix 1 for risks and possible mitigations

## **13 Equality analysis**

An Equality & Fairness Analysis has been undertaken on these proposals/ this project. This has concluded that; Voter Identification is likely to impact many different groups who may not have one of the listed Identification documents. Our focus alongside the Electoral Commission’s campaign will need to be around ensuring people are aware they can obtain a free identification. Potential impacts around showing identification in a polling station include faith groups who may not wish to remove head/face coverings in front of people. A privacy screen will be provided in each polling station which will allow the privacy of the above.

Accessibility: We have processes and procedures in place when assessing the suitability of a building for use as a polling station. Wherever possible our requirements are an accessible entrance and good lighting inside and out. On elections we ask our Polling station Inspectors and Presiding Officers to complete an accessibility checklist to ensure the building still meets our requirements. Currently we provide equipment that aids accessibility (magnifying glass, large print versions of the ballot paper, tactile voting devices, pictorial



guidance to voter's notices). Voters can also request assistance from the Presiding Officer or bring a companion. We will work with East Sussex colleagues and refer to Electoral Commission guidance to assess what additional measures we can introduce to further improve accessibility.

Absent Voting: Applications will require identity verification. It is expected that the identity verification requirements will be NI Numbers and Date of Birth as is currently the requirement in the registration process. This may potentially impact some groups such as elderly voters and those in residential care. We will work with the care homes etc to ensure this does not preclude electors applying for an Absent Vote.

Eu Citizens; Voting and Candidacy Rights: Currently all EU Citizens are entitled to register and vote in certain elections. The legislation is changing these rights and we will be required to work with in the legislation. We currently have 1700 EU citizens registered but have no data on who many may become in ineligible

We will make processes as accessible as possible, but ultimately, we must fall in line with the act's jurisdiction.

#### **14 Environmental sustainability implications**

None arising from this report

#### **15 Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Elections Act 2022 Impact Mitigation and Resource Implications

#### **16 Background papers**

[Elections Act 2022](#)

[AEA Update on Timelines and VID policy](#)

**Election Act 2022 Impact mitigation and resource implications**

Change	Impact	Possible Mitigation	Resource Implications
Electors will be required to identify themselves by showing an approved form of photographic identification before casting their vote in a polling station.	All electors need to be made aware of changes in good time to prevent issues on polling day. Electoral Commission will be running a national campaign.  Risks of voters being turned away and then not returning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity and communication plan running alongside EC work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressure. No communication budget.</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email communications to all electors we hold an email address for (Dec 22)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses existing work processes and would only require officer time to write a new template and upload data.</li> <li>• 43,044 elector email addresses held – Gov.Notify free service</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper communication to electors we don't hold an email address for?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressure – print and postage of 33,535 letters.</li> </ul>
RO's will need to ensure a standard process is in place for checking electors' identification and that this can be used effectively by polling station staff.	Ballot paper issuing progress will be more complicated and significantly slowed down. Impact will be even more significant if record must be kept of type of ID provided.  Difficulties with recruiting polling station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review pay rates and increase to reflect more complicated role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressures 60 Presiding Officers 120 Poll Clerks</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued use of the Modern Polling tablet solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressures cost £28,996</li> </ul>
ROs may need to collect information on the type of identification supplied by voters however, this has not been confirmed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiting for information of what data and in what format this will be required.</li> <li>• It may be that Modern polling will be able to collect and provide this data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressure in additional printing costs</li> </ul>

<p>New statutory enveloped A4 poll card confirming Voter ID requirements</p>	<p>Risks that elector will not realise this is a poll card</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity and communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressure – Poll cards to be A4, enveloped letter</li> </ul>
<p>Ros will also need to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.</p>	<p>RO will need to consider whether a female member of staff employed at each polling station should an elector prefer to do ID check with a female member of staff. This will have a significant impact on staffing elections, making the process even more complicated and likely to cause issues with staff who have worked at a particular polling station consistently?</p> <p>RO will need to designate a private area at each polling station for Presiding Officer to inspect ID in private if required.</p> <p>Staff will need to be trained on the new processes. This could be done through a combination of e-learning and face -to-face training. It is likely that there will be an impact on how long training take (and therefore the amount of time staff needs to be paid for) and the changes may cause staff to reconsider working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider polling station scheme and using more combined stations to give flexibility</li> <li>• Review Polling Station layout plans and redrawn to take account.</li> <li>• We purchased screens for 2021 elections so can look at cost of replacing the clear screen cartridge for a non-clear version</li> <li>• Training likely to be provided in a variety of ways – some face to face and some online.</li> <li>• Some of training contracted to an external provider</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could impact on service capacity to deliver staffing at unscheduled elections.</li> <li>• Budget pressures</li> <li>• At some of the ID Pilots, screens were purchase and issued to Polling stations?</li> <li>• Staff resources needed to draft and deliver training</li> <li>• Estimate in the region of £5,000</li> </ul>

<p>For electors who do not have an accepted form of photographic identification, EROS's will be required to provide a photographic electoral identity document free of charge for the purpose of voting in polling stations</p>	<p>This change will affect all electors with DLUHC estimating 2% of electors will require electoral identity documents. In Lewes this equates to 1,500 electors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
	<p>EROs will also need to deliver a service to assess applications and issue electoral identity documents via a separate system being developed known as ERO Portal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional temporary staff taken on during election periods to primary handle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current understanding is this portal will have little or no integration with current systems causing additional workload.</li> <li>• Budget Pressure – Scale C 6 Electoral Services Assistant on 3-month contract. Estimate £6,000</li> </ul>
	<p>DLUHC intend to develop an online portal for electors requiring electoral identity documents to apply.</p>		
	<p>Temporary electoral identity documents will need to be produced until 5pm on day -6 before polling day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional temporary staff taken on during election periods to primary handle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget pressure – DLUHC state “Central Government will cover costs of electoral identity documents for local authorities.”</li> <li>• Budget Pressure – Scale C 6 Electoral Services Assistant on 3-month contract. Estimate £6,000</li> </ul>
	<p>Electors will have a range of options to choose from when applying for electoral identity documents – in person, by post or online.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity and communications early to emphasise changes and level out peak demand.</li> </ul>	

	There will be an Emergency Proxy application process for anyone who has lost their Identification in line with current Emergency Proxy process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional temporary staff taken on during election periods to primary handle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget Pressure – Scale C 6 Electoral Services Assistant on 3-month contract. Estimate £6,000</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESSIBILITY – MAY 2023</b>			
Improvement of support in polling stations for people with a wider range of disabilities through a general responsibility on Ros to provide equipment to support disabled people to vote.	Ros will have a general responsibility to provide equipment to support people with a range of disabilities in the polling station, adjusting discharge of the duty as appropriate: this may require input from local disability groups and may require suitable equipment and staff depending on polling stations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance is expected from the Electoral Commission.</li> <li>It is hoped to meet a standard set of equipment across East Sussex to ensure consistent delivery at all elections, including cross boundary ones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget pressure; Estimate £15-£20 per polling station?</li> </ul>
	The reality it is impossible to know if a polling station needs more equipment than another does. Providing different equipment was available to some electors but not others.		
<b>ABSENT VOTING – JULY 2023</b>			
Postal voters will need to make a fresh application every three years.	Have in place processes to handle three-yearly postal vote application, including reminders to electors when their three-year period is to end (from June 2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity and communication to encourage early responses</li> </ul>	
Process new postal and proxy vote applications under the new requirements. New applications for a postal vote for the maximum	Currently 23,49 postal voters in Lewes. Personal identifiers (signatures) refreshed every 5 years. Approx 3,000 forms are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity and Communications to encourage early responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in workloads during each refresh period</li> </ul>

<p>period from domestic postal voters will run until the third 31<sup>st</sup> of January following the grant of the applications.</p>	<p>sent annually – with 500 cancelled due to non-response.</p> <p>New process would potentially increase the number of forms sent to 5,000 annually with 800 deleted. If an election is called, then potentially 1,500 applications to vote by post may be received close to the deadline.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in numbers likely to be offset by no requirement to issue a 2<sup>nd</sup> reminder to electors</li> </ul>
<p>The application process for absent votes will include a process for verifying the applicant's identity,</p>	<p>Electors will need to go through additional identification processes when applying for an absent vote, at a snap general election this can be a few thousand electors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity and Communications to encourage responses</li> </ul>	
<p>Online applications for absent voters- DLUHC is exploring how best to implement an online application service for absent votes, including identity verification.</p>	<p>The online application for submitting applications should significantly speed up the processing of applications.</p> <p>However, this is offset by the verification process. Electors not using the online service will provide paper forms that will need to be scanned, processed (with more information requiring input) and verified. Electors who fail the verification will need to be contacted to go through an exceptions process. This will require sending forms – either by post or by email.</p> <p>The verification process will likely delay when postal voting data can be sent to printers. This will have an impact on dispatch date and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity and Communications to encourage early responses.</li> </ul>	

	therefore the date they are returned. The RO will therefore need to consider having more staff at postal vote opening sessions.		
<b>EU VOTING RIGHT – JULY 2023</b>			
The automatic right of European citizens to register to vote, to vote and to stand in local elections will be removed.	All EU citizens on the electoral register will therefore need to have their eligibility to be registered reviewed, at a point after the legislation comes into force, with those determined to have become ineligible – under the new provisions – being removed from the relevant electoral register.		
Two groups of EU citizens will retain their voting and candidacy rights – and therefore remain on the relevant register:	Lewes currently has 1,700 EU citizens registered to vote		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualifying EU citizens': that is citizens of a country included in Schedule 6A to the Bill at the relevant time, and who hold any form of leave to remain or do not require such leave (largely analogous to 'qualifying Commonwealth citizens'). Note that Schedule 6A s a list of countries with which the UK has bilateral voting and candidacy rights treaties. Currently, the UK has such treaties with four</li> </ul>	<p>Until DLUHC specify how the process of determining the eligibility will work it is difficult to understand the full impact. However, it is likely that correspondence will need to be sent to those who are no longer eligible.</p> <p>Once we enter Business as Usual, then we would hope that the IER Digital Service would have a method of verifying eligibility through use of visa and settled status codes.</p>		

<p>countries: Poland, Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg. These countries will be listed on the Schedule at the point the provisions come into force. It is feasible that, in future, other countries will be added to this list.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'EU citizens with retained rights': that is those persons who were already resident in the UK or Islands at the end of the Implementation Period following our exit from the EU (31/12/20). Such persons are also required to have maintained lawful immigration status.</li> </ul>			
<p>EU citizens elected to office before the measures in the Act come into force can remain in office for their full term, irrespective of immigration status, and irrespective of whether they qualify under the new eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>EU citizens elected in May 2023 would be unaffected by these requirements.</p> <p>Any EU citizen wishing to stand in an election from June 2023 will need to meet the requirements.</p>		
<p>For EU citizens elected after these measures come into force, the Bill provides that the individual must have to leave to enter or remain, or not require such leave.</p>			

**OVERSEAS ELECTORS – JULY 2023**



<p>The 15-year limit on expatriates' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections will be removed and all British Citizens overseas who were previously registered or resident in the UK will be enfranchised.</p>	<p>When an overseas registration is made, we will need to verify the previous address by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Checking past copies of the register or</li> <li>- Where this is not possible, via documentary evidence or checking local records; or</li> <li>- Where none of the above is possible, via an attestation from another registered elector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service already has a process in place that allows for searching a wider number of addresses and register years than an elector's application provides. This could be widened to also include checking Council Tax records during the first check to try to close the application as quickly as possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inevitably, there is going to be more work than previously. At the 2019 Parliamentary election one member of the team was fully occupied with Overseas elector applications and absent vote arrangements in the couple of weeks running up to the registration deadline.</li> </ul>
<p>Those enfranchised will be entitled to register in respect of the last UK address at which they were registered, or, if they were never registered, the last UK address at which they were resident.</p>	<p>Lewes holds registers back to 1975.</p> <p>Therefore, to check the registration of any elector who left the UK will be a manual process</p>		
	<p>It is hard to quantify how many additional electors will register in Lewes. However, overseas registration is already a formidable task at Parliamentary elections and this change will not make the system easier. The service will need a comprehensive process that minimises the resource required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration could be given to locate lapsed overseas registrations when the change is brought in (July 2023). This could help reduce the peak in the days before an election.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A data-mining project within current resources?</li> </ul>
<p>The registration period for overseas electors will be extended from one year to up to three years, Electors will be able to reapply or refresh their absent</p>	<p>This process should reduce the number of overseas electors who drop off the register and then need to re-register whilst also ensuring that renewals are not</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular email contact with Overseas electors to confirm registration and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data extracted and uploaded to GovNotify to send emails.</li> </ul>

<p>vote arrangement at the same time as renewing their overseas declaration. Renewals will be linked to a fixed point of 1 November.</p>	<p>needed around traditional election time.</p>	<p>absent vote arrangements</p>	
	<p>However, there is the potential that overseas electors may remain on the register when they have returned to the UK or that they have moved again overseas.</p>		
	<p>EROs and Ros are encouraged to contact overseas electors at the beginning of an election period to inform them of their registration an absent vote arrangements. However, as all general elections will now be unscheduled and therefore data for postal votes sent to printers almost immediately after the announcement – the elector will not have time to complete this application and will therefore need to complete a new application. This will delay the dispatch of their postal voting pack</p>		