

2024 Elections Briefing

Focus on The Elections Act changes & Plans for May Elections

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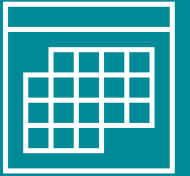
City Council

What we're going to cover today



- Loughton & Shenley By-Election Update
- What polls are on the 2 May – City Ward, Parish, Police and Crime Commissioner and... possible General Election?
- Elections Act: Tranche 2 Measures
- How the changes affect the elections in May 2024
- What we are doing to prepare for all scenarios
- What you can do

L&S 22 February By-Election Update



- 9,800 poll cards started to arrive this week - let us know immediately if any issues with delivery
- Deadline to register to vote - Midnight 6 February
- Postal Deadline (apply online) - 5pm 7 February
- Proxy and VAC Deadline (apply online) - 5pm 14 February
- PV Opening Session: 12 to 4pm Monday 19 February - Room 1.02 Civic Offices & 6pm on Polling Day till 10:30pm
- Verification & Count: 9am 23 February in Council Chamber - we will confirm number of counting agents and guests
- Election Expenses to be returned by Friday 29 March 2024

What's happening in May



- 2 May 2024
 - Local elections (19 City wards) - **Yellow Ballot Paper**
 - 17 parish elections (55 contests) - Lilac ballot paper
 - PCC elections for Thames Valley Area - **Salmon Ballot Paper**

PS: A General Election (GE) called on the same day will be on White Ballot Paper
- Nominations and postal vote opening will be at Civic again
- Friday Count moving back to Marshall Arena, Saturday here at Civic (Chamber)
 - Local Count - Friday 3 May (GE if same day - Overnight Thursday 2 May)
 - PCC Count - Saturday 4 May (PARO is West Berkshire)
 - Parishes - likely also to be Friday but will depend on how many contested

What changes affect May



The new requirements of Elections Act 2022 that will be in effect for May 2024 polls alongside Voter ID:

- Postal and Proxy Voting Applications made online only since 31 Oct 2023 (paper applications have to be rekeyed online by our staff)
- If General Election on same day - Overseas electors (removal of the 15 year limit) since 16 January have no restrictions on registering to vote as long as they were resident / registered in the UK before leaving.
- Postal Vote Handling and secrecy changes ... more on this later....
- Expenditure Limit increased in Nov 2023 as shown In L&S limits circulated

Postal & Proxy Application Changes



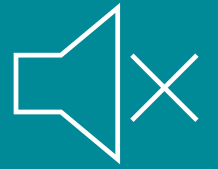
- Electors are now required to provide more information when applying for an absent vote, (including national insurance number) and there is a shorter renewal period (3 years)
- A proxy can now only vote on behalf of no more than four electors, of which no more than two may be on behalf of other domestic electors
- Applications can be made online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote. We can accept paper forms, but this is not the preferred route.
- Transitional arrangements
 - Proxy votes renewal process ongoing now - we wrote to 137 permanent proxy voters to reapply for their proxy vote by 31 January 2024. 71 had their proxy removed today
 - Postal votes renewal process will be in 2025 – we have approx. 40,000 postal votes and we have choices about how to do the renewals (phased or all in one go), but we'll let you know dates and processes etc.

Overseas Electors (OE)



- The 15-year limit on voting rights for British citizens living overseas was removed on the 16 January 2024
- The registration period has been increased from 1 year to 3 years, and renewals will be linked to a fixed point of 1 November
- OEs now able to register at an address where they were previously registered, or if they were never registered, where they were last resident
- We have had 113 applications (online only) so far.. only 26 have an AV
- New process of determining applications where not on register – using Council Tax Data
- EC running a public information awareness campaign through overseas ex-pat networks linked to the FO

Postal Vote Handling and Secrecy



In place for polls held on or after 2 May

- The provisions introduce a ban on the handling of PVs by political campaigners unless their own or close family member
- Limits on handing in postal votes at polling stations / civic offices.
- No more than 5 can be handed in (plus their own) and a form to be completed
- No longer able to just have a ballot box to drop them into unless form filled
- Rejection letters sent post-poll
- Secrecy requirements which apply at a polling station are being extended to postal and proxy votes - offence to try to find out how someone has voted on their PV
- Careful management of those who try to hand in postal votes to security at Civic

Actions and Preparations



- Recruitment of key staff (Presiding Officers, Polling Inspectors and Count Supervisors) underway
- Training underway and planned for core team on all provisions
- One Council approach:
 - CLT briefings and commitment to support with staff and resources
 - IT support for ERO portal connectivity
 - Customer Services have a key role to play
 - Comms plan (including Council Tax book again)
- Continue to work with neighbouring authorities:
 - Informal MoU with Bucks finalised if GE is called includes all arrangements for how we will handle ballot papers, boxes down to the recruitment of staff and training.
- Contact made with TVP Fraud Lead - will attend briefings where possible.
- Poll card changes - Printers making them clearer

What you can do



- Make sure anyone supporting the election campaign is aware of the ban on handling postal votes.
- Reinforce key messages when canvassing:
 - Electors need to take suitable identification to polling stations
 - If need a VAC apply early
 - Postal vote applications now online - paper will be resource intensive for team and may prolong process
 - Inform electors of the limit on handing postal votes in at polling stations and council offices – five, plus their own.
 - • Ensure electors know postal votes left in council letterboxes will be classed as ‘left behind’ and will be rejected - if a form is not completed

Post May changes



EU Citizens' Voting and Candidacy Rights

- EU citizens will no longer automatically be entitled to register to vote, vote, and stand for election
- From June 2024, the ERO will need to review existing EU electors and process applications in line with new eligibility criteria
- Candidacy changes in place at elections from May 2024
- Two groups of EU citizens will retain their rights:
 - 'qualifying EU citizens' from countries with reciprocal agreements, and who have leave, or do not require it, to remain in the UK - **currently Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain**
 - 'EU citizens with retained rights' who were resident in the UK before 1 January 2021

Post May changes continued



EUVCR- 2 main parts to implementation process

- Changes to the application and determination process
- Identify existing EU electors – 18k in MK - review them in Eligibility Confirmation and Review Process (ECR)
- ECR must take place between 7 May 2024 - 31 Jan 2025
- Reminder cycle includes 3 written contacts and a personal contact
- ECR same time as canvass – messaging / timing needs to be considered

Changes to candidacy rights

- Come into force from 7 May – EU citizens standing in after May elections need to ensure that they have leave to enter or remain in the UK, or not require such leave.



Questions

Next Briefing Dates:

First Briefing – 6:30pm Tuesday 5 March @ Civic Offices (Invite to follow)

Second Briefing - 6.30 Thursday 11 April. Location TBC (Invite to follow)