

Full Council

30 March 2023

Appointment of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers and delegation to amend polling places

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: None as relates to electoral services functions.

Local Councillor(s): None as relates to electoral services functions.

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: To appoint Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for the effective and efficient administration of the electoral service function including implementation of Election Act 2022 responsibilities, and to agree a delegation for temporary changes to polling places.

Recommendation:

1. To appoint the following officers as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers with Full Powers: Director, Legal and Democratic Services, Service Manager, Democratic and Electoral Services and Team Leader, Electoral Services.
2. To appoint all Electoral Services Officers as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for the purposes of issuing temporary Voter Authority Certificates only.
3. To delegate the designation of temporary polling places to the Electoral Registration Officer.

Reason for Recommendation:

To expedite the issuing of temporary Voter Authority Certificates, and ensuring the effective and efficient administration of the electoral service function if the Electoral Registration Officer is unable to act. Also, to enable a designation of an alternative polling place (polling station) if the place agreed by Full Council is temporarily unavailable for use.

1. Requirement to appoint deputy electoral registration officers (DEROs)

- 1.1 Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended) (“the Act”) requires every district council to appoint “an officer of the council to be [electoral] registration officer...”. Matt Prosser was appointed as Electoral Registration Officer for Dorset Council at a meeting of the Dorset Shadow Council on 13 December 2018. The electoral registration officer (ERO) has a duty to maintain a list of UK Parliamentary and local government electors. In essence, the ERO is responsible for the publication and maintenance of the Register of Electors and for facilitating the voter registration process.
- 1.2 Section 52(2) of the Act states that “any of the duties and powers of a registration officer may be performed and exercised by any deputy for the time being approved by the council which appointed the registration officer”. The appointment of Deputy Electoral Registration Officers (“DEROs”) cannot be made by the ERO.
- 1.3 The Elections Act 2022 has introduced a number of new requirements including the need for voters to show photographic identification before voting in person at a polling station. The legislation sets out a list of photographic identification that can be used by a person wishing to vote in person at a polling station, and this includes expired documentation provided that the voter is easily recognisable. It will also be necessary for anyone acting as a proxy for a voter to show photographic identification prior to exercise their proxy vote.
- 1.4 The Act recognises that not all registered electors will have a form of photographic identification. In these cases, voters will be able to apply to the Council for a free Voter Authority Certificate. The deadline for a Voter Authority Certificate is 5pm, 6 working days ahead of a poll. Certificates will be issued by a central supplier provided the application is processed by the Council within 24 hours of the 6 working day deadline.
- 1.5 There are circumstances, after the deadline has passed for the Certificate to be issued from the central supplier, where the ERO or DERO may issue

a temporary Voter Authority which must have a wet ink signature of the ERO or any of their deputies.

- 1.6 In order to expedite the issue of temporary Voter Authority Certificates, Council is asked to appoint members of the Electoral Services Team as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers for this purpose only.
- 1.7 Council is also asked to appoint a number of officers as Deputy Electoral Registration Officers with Full Powers to ensure the effective and efficient administration of the electoral services function should the Electoral Registration Officer be unable to act.

2. **Delegation of designation of polling places**

- 2.1 Under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, the Council has a duty to carry out a review of polling arrangements every 5 years, and to designate polling places where polling stations are situated enabling people to cast their vote in person at an election or referendum. This designation is made by Full Council. From time to time, particularly for unscheduled elections, polling stations may be unavailable eg due to a prior booking, building works etc.
- 2.2 In order to expedite the use of an alternative suitable polling station in a polling place, Council is asked to agree a delegation to the ERO, or any of their deputies with Full Powers, to use an alternative polling place if that agreed by Full Council is unavailable. Any permanent change to a polling place would be brought to Full Council as part of the compulsory review process.

3. **Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4. **Environmental Implications**

- 4.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

5. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 5.1 There are no well-being and health implications associated with this report.

6. **Other Implications**

- 6.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

7. **Risk Assessment**

7.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW

Residual Risk: LOW

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

8.1 The delegations will ensure that there is no delay in issuing Voter Authority Certificates ensuring that any registered elector, without existing photographic identification, that wishes to exercise their right to vote in person at a polling station is able to do so. The delegation will also enable an alternative polling station to be used in the event of an agreed polling station becoming available ensuring that voters are able to cast their vote in person.

9. **Appendices**

None.

10. **Background Papers**

[Elections Act 2022](#)

[Representation of the People Act 1983](#)

[Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013](#)