

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Impact Assessment

Title of Policy/Service/Contract: Local Council Elections, 2nd May 2019
Voter Identification Pilot

Division: Legal Services

Lead Officer: Terry Stanley, Business Unit Leader – Democratic Services

Date Assessment completed: 3rd January 2019

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?

- To **enhance public confidence** in the way that the elections are run in the Mid Sussex District, and **reduce any perception** of / opportunity for electoral fraud
- To test if the requirement to produce ID at the polling station, provides a barrier to voting and has a negative impact on **turnout**
- To ensure that all eligible electors in the Mid Sussex District entitled to vote at the Local Council elections on 2 May 2019, **are aware** that on polling day they will be required to take the specified ID to the polling station so that they can cast their vote
- To **provide clear and accessible information** so that anyone who wants to vote, understands what they need to do
- To **encourage** all eligible voters to take the ID to the polling station on polling day
- To **minimise** the potential of voters being turned away from the polling station for presenting an incorrect form of ID
- To **work** with our partners to ensure that any hard to reach groups in the District are contacted

1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

- Residents of the District
- Returning Officer
- Staff (Core electoral services and temporary staff including polling staff)
- Political Parties
- Prospective Candidates and Agents
- Royal Mail
- Suppliers including Printers and Electoral Management software
- Disability groups
- Older People's Associations

1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?

Key demographic facts:

- 148,300 residents in 2017, with a 10.6% increase over the last 10 years.
- 48.9% male and 51.1% female
- 22.7% of the population live in rural wards
- Increasingly older population - 20% of the population are aged 65 and over

- Large number of older people living alone – over 7,500 in 2011.
- 14.2% of households contain at least one person with a long-term illness, health problem or disability, which limits their daily activities.
- 1,545 live births in 2012 and a maternity rate of 59.2 for every 1,000 women aged 15-44 in Mid Sussex
- Over 90% of people living in the District were born in the UK
- 9.7% of the population is made up of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, with 4.8% “white other” and 1% Asian or Asian British
- 96.6% of people have English as their main language.
- 62.7% of people are Christian religion, 26.6% no religion, 0.8% Muslim and 0.6% Hindu
- Relatively prosperous area, but with areas of deprivation in each of the three main towns
- 74.3% of homes are owner-occupied
- Low levels of unemployment, with 0.5% of the economically active population claiming Job Seekers Allowance.
- A highly educated population, with 46.6% of those of working age possessing a degree or equivalent.

1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?

All eligible voters will be affected by the requirement to bring their polling card to the polling station with them to be able to vote. Failing this they will need to show photo identification via either a valid passport or a full driving license. Those electors who do not currently possess accepted forms of photographic identification may be disproportionately affected by the change in behaviour. These groups include:

- People with English as a second language
- Gypsies/travellers
- Residents with various types of disabilities
- Older people (circa 20% per cent of residents over the age of 65)
- Young people (new/first time voters).

A Communications Plan has been prepared to raise awareness of the requirements for voter ID, with a focus on contacts with the protected groups. Appropriate training for polling staff will be provided.

Arrangements will need to be made at polling stations for issues from religious dress and ID requirements.

1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? Y/N

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes for completing impact assessments and complete the next three questions.

Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.

Print / mail service
 Technology enabling partner
 Royal Mail

What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?

No impact

How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?

N/A

2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of different ethnic groups including white minorities, but also established white communities				
<p>Electors have to provide their nationality on registering to vote as this determines their franchise. Although there is the potential problem of language or interpretation being a barrier, there is no evidence to suggest that this has caused any problems to date.</p>	<p>All racial groups are treated in the same way.</p>	<p>For those for whom English is not a first language the information published at our website relating to Voter ID can be viewed using the 'language translation' facility at our website</p>	<p>Terry Stanley</p>	<p>A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete it at each interaction</p>
The needs of men and women. Including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.				
<p>The requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers on the basis of people's sex. The layout of polling stations may create pregnancy and maternity related access issues.</p>	<p>All gender groups are treated the same way.</p>	<p>Polling staff are given training and guidance to consider the layout of the polling station (enabling access for prams/pushchairs) and making seating available.</p>	<p>Terry Stanley</p>	<p>A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction</p>
The needs of disabled people				
<p>Mobility - Although residents who are wheelchair bound or have walking disabilities may have difficulties accessing polling stations, the requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers to these people.</p> <p>Learning disability and mental health</p>	<p>We check the accessibility of polling stations at polling place reviews and this was last conducted in late 2017. We have checked the accessibility of new venues added since and are content that flat and wide access is provided throughout the scheme.</p>	<p>In all cases polling staff will be provided with comprehensive training in how to assist those with learning disabilities, mental health issues and visual impairment. The option of having an absent vote will also be promoted. Waivers can also be applied for where a vote is unable to sign in a consistent</p>	<p>Terry Stanley</p>	<p>A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction</p>

<p>issues - People with these issues may have difficulties in understanding the processes and procedures around the production of ID at the polling station.</p> <p>Special arrangements will need to be made for those with a visual impairment</p>		<p>manner.</p> <p>Every effort will be made to ensure that those who request assistance and guidance on the ID requirements are given it (whether disabled or not).</p> <p>Information will be made available in large print for those with poor eyesight.</p>		
The needs of people with a religion or belief				
<p>For those who wear face coverings for religious reasons special arrangements will need to be made to verify their identity in a private and sensitive way</p>	<p>People of all faiths and beliefs are treated in the same way.</p>	<p>12 polling stations require screening equipment which will be provided. All others have suitable adjacent private rooms to verify identity where there are issues about religious dress.</p> <p>Each polling team will include a female member of staff</p> <p>All polling staff will be trained as to the best way to verify the likenesses of these voters</p>	<p>Terry Stanley</p>	<p>A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction</p>

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people				
The requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers to people on the basis of their sexuality.	All people of whatever sexual orientation are treated the same way.	The requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers to these people. Bringing the unique poll card issued to the polling station means that additional ID is not required.		N/A
Issues from marriage and civil partnership				
All people of whatever marital and civil partnership groups are treated in the same way. However, ID may be out of date and refer to elector's pre-married/civil partnership surname.	N/A	Voters should update their personal details with the Electoral registration Officer. Voters who have changed their name just ahead of the election can explain this to the poll staff and the Presiding Officer may allow the issue of the ballot paper.	Terry Stanley	A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction.
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people				
There may be Issues of being able to provide adequate proof of identity, specifically for the 18-24 age group and older people.	N/A	<p>The Pass scheme photo card and Freedom Travel Passes are to be included in the list of permitted, alternative IDs. Bringing the unique poll card issued to the polling station means that additional ID is not required.</p> <p>Communications Plan makes provision for specific audience messaging to target local groups or influencers to reach older residents and young people.</p>	Terry Stanley	A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction.

The needs of transgender communities				
All gender groups are treated in the same way. However, ID may be out of date and refer to the elector's previous gender due to gender reassignment.	N/A	Information for this specific group will be included in the publicity. Voters may ask to have their ID checked in private. Poll staff will be trained to handle these situations in an efficient and sensitive way.	Terry Stanley	A Cabinet Office data capture function is integral to the technology that is to be used and the poll staff will be trained to complete at each interaction.
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area				
No specific impact identified for the Voter ID pilot.	N/A	N/A		N/A
The needs of people who live in a rural area				
No specific impact identified for the Voter ID pilot.	N/A - Polling stations provided across the District	N/A		N/A

3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main conclusion of this assessment in relation to the impact of participating in the pilot on protected groups and under-registered groups is that there do not appear to be any major issues, and that any potential impact on these groups can be addressed by the approaches proposed. Specific differential impacts for the protected groups identified from the assessment include verification of identity where there are religious dress issues and potential proof of ID issues for older and young voters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising campaign will emphasise that: 'the best way to provide ID is to bring to the polling station the unique, official poll card that we have sent you.' The Communication Plan to publicise the requirements makes provision for contact with relevant protected groups. Training of poll staff to address the needs of protected groups. Specific actions include measures to deal with verification of identity where there are religious dress issues (e.g. face veils) through female staff and private areas at each polling station. For older and younger voters, options to use a range of valid proofs of identity will be provided.

4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

SignatureTerry Stanley.....
Person undertaking the assessment

Date14/1/19.....

SignatureTom Clark.....
Head of Service

Date14/1/19.....