

MOTIONS TO COUNCIL – MOTION TEMPLATE

Date of Council Meeting	14/12/2023
Title of Motion	Council support for the extension of the franchise
Proposer	Cllr Steve Hynd
Seconder	Cllr George James
Recommendation for Council to vote on	<p>The Council commits to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended in England and Northern Ireland to all qualifying foreign nationals in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales. This would ensure a UK-wide and fair approach so that all our residents who are also our council tax payers are enfranchised. The letter should emphasise the Stroud District Council's support for such measures. • Continue collaborative work with voluntary sector organisations in our local authority area to reach residents about current voter eligibility rules and how to vote. • Follow the legislative process to implement the Elections Act and develop a process to ensure that the implementation of the Elections Act, including the removal of some EU citizens from the register, does not wrongfully remove eligible voters from the register. • Continue promoting voter registration and photo ID requirements to residents at citizenship ceremonies, events, and other communication channels.
Context for the motion (i.e. why is the motion being submitted – what is the proposer aiming to achieve)	<p>The Council notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Elections Act is a major piece of national legislation with local implications for the residents of Stroud District, including the use of mandatory photographic voter ID at the polling station and changes to overseas voting and voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens. • The programme of training provided by the Council for councillors and relevant officers on the changes brought by the Elections Act so that residents can be accurately informed about their current voting rights. • That according to the 2021 census, one in six usual residents of England and Wales were born outside the UK. They live, work, study, make use

of public services, and call the UK their home. Many foreign-born residents in Stroud District from EU and Commonwealth countries can vote in our local elections. However, approximately over 1 million residents across England and Northern Ireland from non-EU and non-Commonwealth countries do not have a right to vote.

- That Scotland and Wales implemented residence-based voting rights where all residents with lawful immigration status have the right to vote in local and devolved national elections.
- That all our residents, no matter their nationality, who call Stroud District their home bring significant value to our area adding to the diverse fabric of social and cultural life.
- That Stroud District Council has a long established record in supporting and welcoming asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to the District.
- That Stroud District Council, in appointing a Migrant Champion, plays a key role in leading local and national discussions about migrant rights and must continue to be an exemplar in it's dealings with issues and migrant rights.
- That the voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens with pre-settled and settled status who entered the UK before 2021 will be maintained through the Elections Act.
- That [the London Assembly passed a motion in support of residence-based voting rights on the 11th of November 2021.](#)

The Council expresses concern that

- EU citizens who enter the UK from the 1st of January 2021 and are not covered by bilateral voting rights treaties (currently only active with Poland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain) will lose voting and candidacy rights in local elections when the Elections Act is fully implemented. This will create an unequal situation where some EU citizens will have the right to vote where others will not.
- The complexity in voting eligibility will cause confusion and will reduce voter turnout in local elections amongst migrant voters, a group already seen as having disproportionately a lower voter registration rate compared to British voters.
- The removal of a significant number of EU citizens from the electoral register will place a resource burden on Councils who must ensure that only those who are no longer entitled to be

	registered are removed from the electoral register.
Motions must be about matters for which the Council has a responsibility or which affect the District – please confirm how this criteria is met	This motion asks the council to act within it's mandate by writing to the Secretary of State to express a view, provide training to staff, and develop a process for the implementation of the Elections Act.
Which Council Plan Priority does the Motion support? (select all that apply)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Resilience and Wellbeing – Strengthening and supporting our communities so people feel included and connected 2. Economy, Recovery and Regeneration – Supporting a thriving and resilient local economy 	
Does the motion have potential financial or resource implications for the Council – if yes advise what these might be	
No	
Does the motion have potential legal or constitutional implications for the Council – if yes advise what these might be	
No	
Are there any Environmental or Climate Change Implications that the Council should be aware of – if yes advise what these might be	
N/A	
Are there any equalities impacts associated with the motion? If yes an equalities impact assessment will be required	
Only in the negative sense. That if we fail to extend the franchise to some residents this could have a negative impact on people already often living and working with a second language.	
Does the motion require further background information to enable the Council to make a decision– if yes advise what might be required	
No	

OFFICER IMPLICATIONS

Officer Name	Jenna Malpass
Officer Title	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Officer Contact Details	Jenna.malpass@stroud.gov.uk
Has the Council or is the Council doing any work at the current time in relation to this motion or any associated issues? If yes please add details	

The Council has been preparing for the past 2 years for the implementation of the Elections Act 2022, which is the biggest change of electoral legislation in the last 40 years. A number of changes have already been delivered successfully including the implementation of Online Absent Vote Applications and Photographic Voter ID. The legislation is being introduced in parts over a number of years and therefore the work to implement the changes will be ongoing.

The Elections Team has already attended training sessions which have been run by the Association of Electoral Administrators on the Election Act changes and is registered for future courses based on the timescales of the implementation of the different parts of the legislation. Information Briefings have been provided to Members and training for Councillors, prospective candidates and Election Agents is scheduled for early 2024 and thereafter where relevant. Our Electoral Management Software has also implemented necessary changes based on the parts of legislation that have been introduced so far and the team have been trained on the new processes.

The Elections Team is developing a comprehensive engagement and communications plan which includes outreach work to ensure that residents of the Stroud District are aware of changes as a result of the Elections Act. There will be a significant number of communications and awareness raising activities that will take place ahead of Elections in May 2024 and following any key changes as a result of the Elections Act. The changes regarding EU franchise do not come into effect until after the elections in May 2024. A process will be put in place following the publication of legislation and further guidance from the Electoral Commission to ensure that the legislative process is followed.

An additional post was added to the team in 2020 and the team is currently fully resourced. Training will be provided to the wider Corporate Policy & Governance Team to ensure sufficient resource is in place throughout the implementation of the Elections Act and the May 2024 elections.

Does the motion support any of the priorities set out in the Council Plan?

1. Community Resilience and Wellbeing – Strengthening and supporting our communities so people feel included and connected.

Does the motion have potential financial or resource implications for the Council – if yes advise what these might be and confirm whether budget is available

There are no financial or resource implications as a result of the Motion. There are implications as a result of the Elections Act which have been considered in order to ensure there is adequate capacity to successfully deliver the required changes. Grant funding has also been provided as broken down below:

Electoral Integrity Programme – New Burdens Funding

Year	Amount	Allocation
22/23	£7359	Voter ID, Accessibility and Training
23/24	£22000	Postal Proxy, Overseas Electors, Communications and Engagement for the rollout of Voter ID

Does the motion have potential legal or constitutional implications for the Council – if yes advise what these might be

No

Are there any Environmental or Climate Change Implications that the Council should be aware of – if yes advise what these might be

No

Should an equality impact assessment be completed before the deliberation of this motion?

No

Does the motion require further background information to be carried out to enable the Council to make a decision – if so advised what might be required

No

END