

**Equality Impact Assessment**

**Full**

Governance Service

Directorate

Service

Elections

Title of policy, strategy, project or service

Voter Identification Pilot

Is the policy, strategy, project or service;

Existing New/proposed Changed/Reviewed

Yes

Q 1. Aim of the policy, strategy, project or service

* To enhance public confidence in the way that the elections are run in the Braintree District.
* To ensure that all eligible electors in the Braintree District entitled to vote at the Local Council elections on 2 May 2019, are aware of the need to take appropriate ID to the polling station
* To provide clear and accessible information so that all eligible electors understands what ID evidence is accepted
* To enable all eligible voters to take the ID to the polling station on polling day
* To work with our Public, Voluntary and faith sector partners to ensure that hard to reach groups in the District are informed of ID requirements

Q 2. Give details of existing information, data and consultations you have used to consider the

impact this policy, strategy, project or service is likely to have on the protected characteristic

The principal of ID checks at UK Polling Stations is not a new one. Checks were first introduced in Northern Ireland in 1985 when electors were required to produce ID from a prescribed list.

Following evaluation, there did however, remain a lack of public confidence in the electoral process as the checks were considered inadequate.

The Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 strengthened Polling Station ID checks by limiting forms of ID to one of four forms from a prescribed list. Where electors were unable to provide such evidence electors could apply for a Northern Ireland Voter Identity Card.

The revised requirements were introduced for the 2003 Northern Ireland Assembly elections in 2003 where the Returning Officer for NI reported 3,493 initially failed to present the required ID. Presiding Officers reported no significant problems in Poll administration.

Since the introduction of Photo ID in 2003 there have been 8 elections cycles with 99% of voters surveyed at the 2007 Assembly expressing no difficulties in providing the revised evidence requirements.

The first pilot schemes in England piloted the use of a range if ID models which included:

**Photo only** – Passport, Driving Licenc, Bus Pass

**Mixed model** which allowed for a range of Photo and Non Photo (such as debit/credit cards) ID

**Poll Card** only models at polling stations at the 2018 Local Council Elections.

There are some concerns that the requirement to produce ID at a polling station may cause a decline in turnout with some groups will be less likely to produce the required ID, this is particularly true of, for example, the elderly.

Q3. If there are gaps in this information, data and consultations how will you address this?

E.g. if you are planning to carry out a consultation tell us who you will consult with and when.

In supporting the Voter ID program, the Returning Officer has considered fully the 2018 pilot evaluations and has submitted proposals to the Cabinet Office for a mix of Photo and Non Photo evidence:

**Photo:** Passport, Driving Licence, EU Identity Cards, MoD ID cards, Concessionary (including Disabled) Bus passes

**Non Photo**: Poll Card, Debit /Credit Card or Cheque Book, Building Society Pass book, Bank statements or Credit card statements, Driving Licence, Utility Bills, Birth or Marriage certificates

It is the Returning Officers belief that the inclusion of a comprehensive range of Non Photo ID which includes the Poll Card will minimise any ID limitations to any elector wanting to vote.

It is expected that there will be some electors who cannot provide the required identification. This being the case the Electoral Registration Officer will be authorised to issue an Electoral Registration Certificate which will be accepted at the Polling Stations

The Returning Officer will, through the Council’s links with community champions such as Community 360 and the Braintree faith forum present the process and full range of ID allowed for full consideration. Should there be an areas of sustainable concern we will develop a range of solutions within the legislative framework.

In addition ALL Polling station staff will attend full face to face Voter ID training to ensure that both all aspects of legislation are applied and there is consistency of interpretation across all Polling Stations within the Braintree District.

* The Braintree District covers 236 square miles with 3 focal commercial centres.
* 83% of households have access to a car or van
* Gypsy and traveller 0.09%
* Over 99% people living in the District speak English
* Over 93% people living in the District were born in United Kingdom
* 3.4% of the population is made up of Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
* 98% of households stated they were Christian or No religious belief.

Source: Office of National Statistics census 2011

Q 4. Thinking about each of the protected characteristics what impact does or could the

policy, strategy, project or service have on each? How will you address this?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Impact (positive or negative)** | **Proposed action (including by whom, by when)** |
| Age | * Elderly electors may not have passports or photo driving licences * Young people | 25,098 (16.6%) of the District population are aged 65+  The inclusion of Photo Bus passes and the addition of Non Photo identification including Poll Cards and Debit/Credit Card have had a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to this sector of electors compared to some pilots in 2018  The option of having an absent (Postal)vote will also be promoted.  **Communication focus**   * Care Homes including sheltered accommodation * Community Centres * Independent Living/Supported housing and community meal teams * Community Transport * Homeless shelters and Hostels * Voluntary sector via Community 360 * Braintree religious forum   15,119 (10.0%) of the District population are aged 16-24. Of these only those aged 18 and over are entitled to vote. This age group are acquainted with the principle ID evidence when purchasing or seeking access to age restricted products such as alcohol, or premises such as bars or night clubs  The inclusion of Poll Cards and Debit/Credit Card amongst others will have a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to this sector of electors  **Communication focus**   * Schools and Colleges * Sports Centres |
| Disability | * Electors with physical disabilities are less likely to have access to Photo driving licence * Electors with Mental Health disabilities may be less likely to have access to Photo driving licence | The inclusion of Photo Bus cards which includes those for disabled persons and their companions. The addition of Non Photo Poll cards and Debit Credit Card have had a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to electors  **Communication focus**   * Independent Living/Supported housing and community meal teams * Community Transport   The inclusion of Bus cards and the addition of Poll cards and Debit/Credit Card have had a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to electors  The option of having an absent vote will also be promoted. |
| Gender reassignment | * Photo ID may be out of date | Cabinet Office guidance “out of date photo ID is acceptable provided the elector bears a likeness to the photo”. The addition of Poll cards, Debit/Credit Card have had a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to electors  All gender groups are treated equally in electoral Law and processes. The Returning Officer will ensure Polling Staff receive appropriate training. |
| Marriage & civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination). | ID may be in maiden or previous name | Provided that evidence supports the identity of the elector Presiding Officer is authorised to issue a Ballot Paper.  The requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers to these people. |
| Pregnancy & maternity | No Impact | The requirement to provide ID should not present any additional barriers to expectant and nursing parents, as this does not impact on their ability to have or maintain ID |
| Race | If English is poor this may present challenges in ensuring effective communication | If an electors English is poor they may have difficulty understanding the need for ID  The largest Nationality group within the District is Polish 951electors (0.01%), Consider direct communication to Polish Electorate or Multi lingual communication to the “top 5” Nationalities across the District.  Possible use of Pictorial information  Access to Multi Cultural forum |
| Religion or belief | To complete visual identification it will be a requirement that religious headwear be temporarily removed | Based on 2011 census data there were 224 Muslim households, No age/gender data are however available  The addition of Poll Cards and Debit/Credit Card have had a positive impact on the range of Non Photo evidence available to electors  Returning Officer will endeavour that:   * Polling Places have 1 female member of staff available so as not to compromise religious requirements * There is separate room/discrete space available for ID verification * Where no facilities are available Polling Staff are advised to clear the polling station for Identity to be established prior to the issue of a Ballot paper.   **Communication focus**   * Initial discussion with the Braintree Imam have been positive with a range of actions being accepted: * RO/DRO to attend “Friday prayers” (10 min presentation to male only audience) * RO/DRO to attend Muslim school celebration event early March (10 min presentation to mixed audience) * Imam to promote Voter ID via their email and Social Media channels. * Imam content with proposals from the RO Polling Station with regard to facial identification. * Contact with Local religious leaders |
| Sex | No Impact  Note: The impact on female member of the Islamic faith have been considered under Religion or belief above | 2011 Census indicates that 51.6% of Braintree residents are female and 48.4% are male  With regard to electoral franchise and process there is no distinction in treatment with all electors regardless of gender being treated equally by the Returning Officer.  There is may be a perception that Anonymous electors are female victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence is not however restricted to gender and as such electoral arrangements will be consistent for both female and male electors. Cabinet Office proposals will address this and ensure equity of application |
| Sexual orientation | No Impact | All people of whatever sexual orientation are treated the same way, it is not anticipated that this characteristic impacts on the availability of identity documentation. |

Steve Daynes

Completed by (Print name):

Signature :

Ian Hunt

Approved by Head of Service (print name):

Signature :

Date: