

Council 27th February 2022

Item 6 refers.

Questions submitted by Members.

6.a QUESTION TO THE LEADER

Submitted by Councillor Beadle

Question:

There are many concerns amongst residents about the Government's imposition of new voter ID checks that councils will have to undertake, starting with the local elections this May. This will require councils to have more staff at polling stations, and their roles will become more difficult.

Concerns include the impact this will have on council finances, the extra burden and difficulties placed on council staff at polling stations, and the potential for reducing voter participation.

Can the Leader advise what the additional cost burden is to this council caused by these measures, and what additional training and support is being given to council staff who undertake roles at polling stations?

Response:

The additional cost burden to the council and the additional training and support available to council staff who undertake roles at polling stations are as follows:

- **Grants** - Grants from DLUHC have now been confirmed and received for the extra burden placed on LA's regarding the Election Act changes. Harborough District Council have received £17,206 for 2022/23 and will receive £34,555 for the year 2023/24
- **Awareness Strategy** - This has assisted us in running an awareness campaign for our voters which includes a radio campaign, posters throughout the district, an information leaflet sent in every 2023/24 Council Tax bill, Printed pharmacy bag, social media, in conjunction with the Electoral Commission awareness campaign. Poll cards will be sent out end March with information regarding voter ID and a full list of acceptable ID included.
- **Voter ID** - Electors are able to request ID through the GOV UK site which is linked to all Electoral Registration systems. We are already receiving such request and have processed a number which have been now sent for printing at the central government printing hub.
- **Training** - Training on all aspects of the Election Bill changes including Voter ID, types of ID, using the Voter ID request software, train the trainers for poll staff has already been carried out across the country, our own permanent staff have been to all required training at no cost to the authority.

- **Poll Staff training** - We use both face to face and online training for our poll staff prior to all elections. This year training will include voter ID what can be accepted and how to deal with customers who do not have ID. The Electoral Commission have produced a number of training aids including quick guides and the polling station handbook for all our staff.

- **Increased staff numbers** – As usual we will have a staffed help desk with a dedicated number for election queries as well as ensuring that our own Customer Services department have a full list of FAQ's to enable them to answer questions. We will be increasing the number of polling station inspectors to assist poll staff with queries regarding voter ID at the polling station. As a large number of our stations are in rural areas and have a low number of electors they will not require extra staff to assist, but we will be ensuring that the larger urban stations will be fully staffed in line with the Electoral Commission guidelines, this will include part time poll staff to assist during the peak time, this will help in keeping the cost down