

Council – 19 July 2023

Labour Amendment to motion 8b – The impact of voter ID laws on democracy in Trafford

This Council notes that:

The 2023 local elections were the first to be held under the regulations imposed by the Elections Act 2022, which required electors to present Photo ID when voting in person.

Many Elected Members experienced upset, angry and frustrated voters who were unable to cast a vote on Polling Day because they could not locate the right Photo ID, or because the ID they had was invalid.

The Government originally claimed Voter ID Certificates would minimize any negative impact on turnout which the introduction of Voter ID might have.

In April, the Prime Minister said: "our elections should have some form of identification so that we can make sure they are high-integrity processes."

However, this Council further notes:

In May, the Conservative ex-Business Secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg said: "Parties that try and gerrymander end up finding their clever scheme comes back to bite them, as, dare I say, we found by insisting on voter ID for elections".

Across England, the place with the highest rate of voters being turned away was Knowsley, the third-most deprived area in England.

Meanwhile South Oxfordshire, with very low indices of multiple deprivation saw the lowest rate for voters being turned away.

The Government's own research identified that 2 million people, eligible to vote in England, Scotland and Wales, do not have permissible forms of Photo ID. Yet just prior to the 2023 Local Elections, the number of voters without ID who had successfully obtained a Voter ID Certificate was just 4%.

This Council recognizes that:

The current Government's intention was not to secure the integrity of in-person voting, but was instead an attempt to tilt the system in their party's favour.

The data from organisations like Democracy Volunteers reveals women were disproportionately affected, in part because women are more likely to have changed their name as a result of marital status, and thus not have ID that matches the Electoral Roll. This drives up inequality in access to voting.

The data from across England confirms that the more deprived areas were more negatively affected by being unable to vote, also driving an inequality in access to voting.

~~It is likely that the national picture is replicated in Trafford, with more deprived areas more negatively affected by being unable to vote.~~

~~Given that one of the three aims in the Council's 'Corporate Plan' is tackling inequalities arising from poverty, the unequal access to voting between affluent and deprived areas of the borough needs to be tackled.~~

The Electoral Commission (EC) continues to collect and analyse the data to provide a more determinative picture.

A full report will be published in September 2023 in which they will also be looking at the patterns of higher and lower levels of people turned away across local authorities in order to identify any trends. This will assist Trafford Council to target improved voter engagement.

This Council therefore resolves to:

Going forward, (provided there are no restrictions imposed by legislation or the Electoral Commission on what data can be released), to publish ~~Be transparent about the difference in voters turned away in more deprived areas, compared to more affluent parts of the Borough, by publishing~~ the number of voters turned away for not having the right Photo ID data in each individual polling district for the elections held in 2023 and for future elections held in Trafford. This data could be collated and published at polling district level.