

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Motion 1

Extension of the Franchise

Councillor Nayee (29 February 2024)

“1. That this Council notes that:

- a) The Elections Act is a major piece of national legislation with local implications for the residents of this local authority, including the use of mandatory photographic voter ID at the polling station, changes to overseas voting and voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens.
- b) 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 of this local authority from EU and Commonwealth countries can vote in our local elections. However, over 1 million residents across England and Northern Ireland do not have a right to vote.
- c) 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.
- d) Over [50% of people agree that every resident, no matter where they are from, should have the right to vote at least in local elections](#).

2. That this Council welcomes:

- a) That all our residents, no matter their nationality, call this local authority their home and bring significant value to our area.
- b) 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.
- c) That [11 local authorities across England have passed motions asking for the right to vote to be extended to all residents in local elections](#).

3. That this Council expresses concern that:

- a) 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 Denmark, 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.
- b) The complexity in voting eligibility will cause confusion and will reduce voter turnout in local elections amongst migrant voters, a group already under-registered compared to British voters.

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- c) A burden will be placed on Local Authorities managing the removal of a significant number of EU citizens from the electoral register. This may result in some being wrongfully removed from the electoral register.
4. That this Council commits to:
- a) Write to the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the relevant shadow frontbenchers requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended to all qualifying foreign nationals in England and Northern Ireland in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales. This would ensure a UK-wide and fair approach to voting rights so that all our residents, who are also our council tax payers, are enfranchised.
 - b) Delivering a training to councillors and relevant officers on the changes brought by the Elections Act so that residents can be accurately informed about their current voting rights.
 - c) Work collaboratively with voluntary sector organisations in our local authority to reach residents about current voter eligibility rules and how to vote.
 - d) Ensure council officers in Democratic Services have a strategy in place 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.
 - e) Continue promoting voter registration and photo ID requirements to residents at citizenship ceremonies, events, and other communication channels.”