

REQUEST	RESPONSE
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How many Voter Authority Certificates (VACs) has the council issued, how many applications has it rejected, and what is the demographic profile of those applications, both accepted and rejected? 2) Can you confirm that the Chief Executive, acting in their role as the Returning Officer, and/or the Elections Department of your council, has received guidance from the Electoral Commission and/or the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities about implementing the new voter ID legislation for the May 4th elections? 3) Can you confirm (a) all polling station staff have been trained on implementing the new processes and if so, (b) what that training has entailed. 4) Can you confirm whether the Chief Executive, in their role as Returning Officer, has presented a report on preparedness for the Voter ID requirements to the full council or any other appropriate committee of the council? 5) Has this included a risk assessment and mitigation plan? (If yes, please can you supply a copy of that report?) 6) Can you confirm whether an audit has been undertaken of all proposed polling stations to identify a private room for those people who, for whatever reason, cover their face in public? 7) What was the outcome of this audit if it has happened? (For example, have any polling stations been found to be unsuitable, and if so, how many?) 8) Has the council undertaken a public information campaign to inform voters about the new Voter ID requirements? 	<p>With reference to your request for information relating to this request, I would like to draw your attention to the distinction between the roles of the local authority and those of the Returning Officer for local elections.</p> <p>The role of the Returning Officer is separate from that of the Chief Executive of the local authority and the responsibilities and duties associated with the former roles are personal to the postholder. A list of public bodies and local authorities that are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act is available at the following website:</p> <p>http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/schedule/1</p> <p>As you will see, the Freedom of Information Act does not list any person appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (or related electoral legislation). It therefore follows that the (Acting) Returning Officer or any other person appointed under the 1983 Act (or related electoral legislation) such as the Counting Officer, are not subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.</p> <p>Therefore, for questions 1 to 7 as there is no statutory obligation to provide you with this information, I am on this occasion unable to supply any answers to your question.</p> <p>In relation to question 8</p> <p>Furthermore, just for clarification the Voter Authority Certificate go live date including the launch of the online portal only was made live on 16th January 2023. So, it is also worth pointing out that detailed information could only be shared from January onwards once the Electoral Commission's national campaign launched, and the Voter Authority Certificate application portal opened.</p> <p>Here's a summary of local communication plan which is happening in Wigan to support the national campaign:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every household in the Wigan Borough been sent a direct communication/letter informing residents inform voters about the new Voter ID requirements informing them of the changes and how to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate if they do not have any ID. Enclosed with the letter is a postal vote application for every non-postal voter which is another avenue the voters can choose to do if they don't have voter ID. • Insert in borough life currently begin distributed, delivered to all households. • Insert in council tax booklets, delivered to all households. • Regular inclusion in the residents email newsletter that goes out weekly. • Regular inclusion in the members briefing email which goes out weekly encouraging them to share the information with their constituents. • Series of regular social media messages from our social accounts.