



Item 16.3

Full Council – 21 November 2022

1st Labour Group Motion

Our Home Our Vote

The Council notes:

- The Elections Bill has passed Royal Assent. The Bill when enabled will introduce a number of measures which will impact electors and local authorities including mandatory photographic voter ID, overseas voting, and voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens.
- Election officials say they have not had enough time to prepare for voter ID and are worried that thousands of people will be turned away from polling stations. Labour Party MPs have raised concerns regarding voter suppression, since six of the Government-accepted IDs are specifically targeted at older people, while almost none are aimed at younger people.
- In Brent, 169,000 residents were born abroad, and across London over 12% of residents are from the European Union.
- They live, work, study, make use of public services, and call London their home. Many of our foreign-born residents from EU and Commonwealth countries can vote in our local elections. However, approximately 377,000 Londoners that were born in non-EU and non-Commonwealth countries cannot vote in our elections.
- 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.
- A poll conducted by Number Cruncher showed that 63% of people agree that all residents with lawful status in the UK should have the right to vote in local elections in England and Northern Ireland.

The Council welcomes:

- That 37% of Londoners are born outside of the UK and that the voting and candidacy rights of EU citizens with pre-settled and settled status who entered the UK before 2021 will be maintained.

- That the London Assembly passed a motion in support of residence-based voting rights on the 11th of November 2021 and that various organisations in the democracy and immigration sector have signed a joint statement in support of the “Our Home Our Vote” campaign for residence-based voting rights.

The Council expresses concern that:

- EU citizens who enter the UK from 2021 and are not covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, or by ‘bilateral treaties’ covering voting rights, will not have voting and candidacy rights in local elections from 2022. This will create an unequal situation where some EU citizens will have the right to vote where others will not.
- Brent Council also expresses concerns that the democratic rights to vote in local or national elections will impact many minority groups once voter ID is implemented through the Election Act;
- We fear this complexity in voting eligibility will cause confusion and will reduce voter turnout in London elections, undermining the effectiveness of projects such as London Voter Registration Week working to improve voter registration.

The Council will commit to:

- Increasing its efforts to encourage eligible voters to register to vote in advance of future elections. For instance, but not limited to, including information about voter registration and eligibility in council tax letters, council social media communications and the Brent Magazine.
- Brent Council will work closely with organisations and charities operating across our borough to ensure that the information about local election voting rights reaches as many EU citizens as possible that call Brent home.
- Ask that the Leader of the Council write to Andrew Stephenson, Minister of State for Local Government, Faith and Communities requesting that the right to vote be extended to all residents in local elections in England and Northern Ireland.

Councillor Teo Benea
Sudbury Ward