

Council

24 May 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Elections 2023 Report
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Mike Graham, Returning Officer
Lead councillor	Cllr Jason Brock, Leader of the Council
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	Council is requested: (1) To note report (2) To ask the Monitoring Officer to prepare a report for Policy Committee on the impact of Voter ID at this election and other forthcoming changes to elections in Reading.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The Borough Elections in 2023 returned to their normal cycle of elections by thirds. In 2022, the all-out elections following ward boundary changes meant that the three councillors in each ward were elected for periods of between one and four years to allow for the re-introduction of elections by thirds.
- 1.2. On 4 May 2023, fifteen of our sixteen wards elected one councillor and there was a by-election in Park ward which elected two councillors. This report outlines the results.

2. Policy context

- 2.1. The Elections Act 2022 introduced photographic identification for voters at polling stations for this election. The Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators issued lots of guidance in the run up to the election and staff involved with elections undertook a great deal of training; receiving training for themselves and then passing this training on to the polling station staff.

3. Elections outcome

- 3.1. Overall, Labour gained one seat and the Conservatives lost one.
- 3.2. With retirements and other changes we have five new councillors. They are:
 - Cllr Amjad Tarar, Battle ward, Labour. Cllr Tarar takes over from the retiring Cllr Gul Khan (Labour).
 - Cllr Sam Juthani, Caversham Heights ward, Labour. Cllr Juthani defeated the incumbent Cllr Paul Carnell (Conservative).
 - Cllr Stephen Goss, Emmer Green ward, Conservative. Cllr Goss takes over from Cllr Harry Kretchmer (Conservative) who retired.
 - Cllr Sarah Magon, Park ward, Green. Cllr Magon takes over from the retiring Cllr Brenda McGonigle (Green) in the by-election.

- Cllr Ama Asare, Thames ward, Labour. Cllr Asare takes over from the retiring Cllr Nusrat Sultan (Labour).
- 3.3. Four of these five, Cllrs Tarar, Juthani, Goss and Asare are elected until 2027. Cllr Magon will serve the remainder of Cllr McGonigle's term, i.e. until May 2024.
- 3.4. The following councillors were also re-elected until May 2027:
- Cllr Mohammed Ayub, Abbey ward, Labour
 - Cllr Jan Gavin, Caversham ward, Labour
 - Cllr Paul Woodward, Church ward, Labour
 - Cllr Paul Gittings, Coley ward, Labour
 - Cllr Doug Cresswell, Katesgrove ward, Greens
 - Cllr Raj Singh, Kentwood ward, Conservatives
 - Cllr Collette Dennis, Norcot ward, Labour
 - Cllr Josh Williams, Park ward, Greens
 - Cllr Will Cross, Redlands ward, Labour
 - Cllr John Ennis, Southcote ward, Labour
 - Cllr Anne Thompson, Tilehurst ward, Liberal Democrats
 - Cllr Alice Mpofu-Coles, Whitley ward, Labour
- 3.5. The turnout at the election was 30.4%. The composition of the Council is now as follows:

Labour	32
Green	7
Conservative	5
Liberal Democrats	3
Independent	1

- 3.6. I intend to provide a report to a future Policy Committee about the roll-out of Voter ID and other changes from the Elections Act 2022 which will be implemented in Reading over the next few years.

4. Contribution to strategic aims

- 4.1. The Elections Act 2022 outlines new responsibilities on the Council to register overseas voters, introduce changes to absent voting and to introduce voter ID. These new responsibilities are being implemented at different times.
- 4.2. These changes are not strategic priorities for the Council but must be implemented nevertheless. It is in the best interests of the Council and Reading residents that they are implemented as efficiently and effectively as possible.

5. Environmental and climate implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. There are no climate impacts arising from this report.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1. A great deal of publicity was necessary to alert residents to the changes in Voter ID. I am grateful to colleagues in the Communications Team for the work they did in support of this election. In addition, we relied upon the national advertising promoted by the Electoral Commission (radio, television, billboards etc).
- 6.2. I am grateful to the project undertaken by No5 counselling which engaged young people in Reading making resources for social media to highlight the need to register to vote and get photo ID in time for the Election.
- 6.3. We will review how effective our engagement was to learn what can be improved for the next election. I will include details in my report to Policy Committee.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1. Equalities impacts arising from the Elections Act changes will be detailed in my report to Policy Committee.

8. Other relevant considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. There are none.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. None arising from this report. Financial impacts arising from the Elections Act changes will be detailed in my report to Policy Committee.

11. Timetable for implementation

- 11.1. Not applicable.

12. Background papers

- 12.1. There are none.