

## DLUHC - New Burdens Funding

### 1. What is the policy?

- 1.1 A New Burden is defined as a policy or initiative which increases the cost of providing local authority services. In 2010, the Cabinet agreed that all New Burdens on local authorities must be properly assessed and fully funded by the relevant department.
- 1.2 The introduction of the Electoral Integrity Programme will place a burden on all local authorities in various ways, including, for example, the time administrative staff will need to process applications for Voter Authority Certificates, additional equipment that may be required for some offices or polling stations, or additional poll clerks that may need to be hired for polling day.
- 1.3 DLUHC are therefore responsible for providing local authorities with funding for this additional burden.

### 2. Who does this policy affect?

- 2.1 This applies to all local authorities in the UK including Tower Hamlets.

### 3. How will funding be provided?

- 3.1 Funding will be provided through a hybrid approach comprising of upfront grant payments and Justification Led Bids.
- 3.2 Grants will enable a proportion of the allocation to be distributed early in the year, via a single grant payment.
- 3.3 Justification Led Bids will release funds to local authorities later in the year, retrospectively based on evidence of spend.

### 4. When will local authorities receive their funding?

- 4.1 Tower Hamlets received an initial grant in November 2022.
- 4.2 A further grant payment was then received in April 2023, and another will be made in April 2024.
- 4.3 The JLB window to retrospectively claim additional funding is in the Summer/Autumn of 2023 and then repeated in 2024.
- 4.4 To date Tower Hamlets has received the following grants from Government (DLUHC).
  - 2022/2023 - £10,300
  - 2023/2024 - £6,306
  - 23/24 - £52,070

### 5. What will the funding cover?

- 5.1 Below is the breakdown of cost lines for the accessibility policy changes and the introduction of voter identification.
- 5.2 The funding for other changes being introduced after May 2023 is still being finalised and will be communicated in due course. Funding for by-elections will be provided by JLB (in summer/autumn 2023 and 2024).

## **6. Accessibility:**

6.1 Equipment – via the grant received in Nov 2022 and JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023:

- Funding will be provided to purchase a range of equipment to support disabled people to vote.
- The purchase of equipment is at the discretion of Returning Officers, who must have regard to EC guidance, and may include:
  - general accessible equipment.
  - assistive writing devices such as pencil grips; and
  - additional seating for those less able to stand.

6.2 Staff time – via JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023:

- 10 minutes of additional set up time for accessibility related equipment.
- Training for electoral administrators – via grant in April 2023 and April 2024:
  - one additional day of training to cover both accessibility and voter identification policies.
  - Training for polling station staff – via grant in April 2023 and April 2024: 10 minutes additional training.

## **7. Voter identification:**

7.1 Electoral Staff admin time (processing time) – via grant in Nov 2022, April 2023, April 2024 and JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023 and 2024:

7.2 Funding will cover the additional time it takes to process Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) applications.

- On average, this has been assumed to take 6 minutes for an online application and 8 minutes for a paper application.
- Following the introduction of the VAC in 2023 prior to the local elections in May 2023 the online assumption is broadly correct when the application is complete but where there are enquiries to complete the application this can take a considerable time to complete, and no assumption has been made for these scenarios.
- When an application for the VAC is received through the post the assumption is also about right, but the same principles apply in that enquiries significantly increase the time taken to process.
- Applications received in person at the Town Hall can take more than 30 minutes if complete, but this is to be tested given the time for staff to attend reception and the numbers of applications that may be received prior to polls held in Tower Hamlets. If incomplete this will again only add to the time needed e.g., photographs taken, and entries made onto the portal by staff.

7.3 Staff – via grant in April 2023 and 2024 (poll clerks) and JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023 and 2024 (contact centre staff)

- One additional poll clerk per polling station for year 1 (2023/24) and 2 (2024/25) and in every UKPGE year of the policy; and
- One temporary contact centre staff member for the first two years of implementation for two months before elections.

7.3 Equipment - via JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023:

- The purchase of one camera and one printer-scanner per local authority (if required); and
- one privacy screen and mirror per polling station (if required).

#### 7.4 Poll card costs – via grant in April 2023 and 2024

- Difference between current poll card and new poll card (A4 and enveloped) will be funded.

#### 7.5 Storage – via JLB in Summer/Autumn 2023 and 2024:

- Additional storage space to store additional equipment.
- The required space is assumed to be 75 square feet and it is estimated around 2/3 of LAs will need it.

#### 7.6 Training for administrators – via grant in Nov 2022, April 2023 and April 2024:

- one additional day of training to cover both accessibility and voter identification policies.
- Training for polling station staff– via grant in April 2023/24:
  - 30 minutes additional training.

### **8. Who has been consulted during development of the funding model?**

8.1 Significant engagement with local authorities has taken place over several years to build a reliable evidence base and to ensure the funding models are as accurate as possible.

8.2 Assumptions, approaches, and individual cost lines have been tested with an Expert Panel, which is made up of a range of sector organisations and local authorities from across Great Britain, who have provided critical feedback on the funding model. We have also received feedback and evidence through numerous cost surveys since 2019.

### **9. What are the next steps?**

9.1 Letters were sent to all local authorities in September to provide a written commitment that DLUHC will be providing funding for implementation of the Elections Act under the New Burdens doctrine. This provided Financial Directors the assurance they needed to begin to commit funding, for example for the hiring and training of staff.

9.2 Formal Grant Determination Letters (GDLs) were sent to all local authorities at the end of November 2022 and in April 2023, setting out the funding allocations for each local authority for the implementation of the voter identification and accessibility policies, and providing guidance on costs. Initial New Burdens funding was released to local authorities alongside their GDL at the end of November 2022.

9.3 The second grant payment was made via BACS on 14 April 2023 via Section 31 grants.

9.4 Information and guidance on the JLB process was circulated to local authorities in February 2023