[redacted]

From: FOI
Sent: 22 March 2023 08:48
To: [redacted]
Subject: FOI 024-23 - Response

Dear [redacted],

Our Ref: FOI-024-23

Thank you for your email to the Electoral Commission dated 12 March 2023 and received by the Commission on 13 March 2023.

The Commission aims to respond to requests for information promptly and has done so within the statutory timeframe of twenty working days.

Your request is shown below followed by our response.

I would like to know the budget spent by the UK government on setting up the Voter Authority Certificate scheme.
If possible, I would also like to know the expenditure (to date) for issuing VACs to applicants.

Our response is as follows:

We do not hold the information you have requested.

The new requirement for voters to show identification before they can be issued with a ballot paper at polling stations, is set out in the Elections Act 2022. The Elections Act is legislation that the UK Government developed and introduced into Parliament in July 2021. Parliament approved the legislation in April 2022.

The Electoral Commission does not hold information about the budget for setting up the Voter Authority Certificate scheme or spending on issuing certificates to applicants because the UK Government is responsible for delivering both the online application portal and the centralised printing facility for Voter Authority Certificates. The government department that is responsible for delivering this activity is the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-levelling-up-housing-and-communities)

The Commission is responsible for helping to raise public awareness of the new requirement, and for providing guidance to support Returning Officers and electoral administrators to understand and implement this new requirement.

The UK Government has published a number of documents that set out its assessment of the impact of the Elections Act, including the potential cost of delivering the Voter Authority Certificate scheme. Some of these documents refer to the Elections Bill because they were published before Parliament had approved the legislation.

- Elections Bill Impact Assessment: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-02/0138/2021-05-07ImpactAssessmentREV.pdf

- Voter Identification Regulations 2022 Impact Assessment: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/1382/impacts

Providing you with the weblink to this information is in line with the section 21 exemption of the Freedom of Information Act, in that the Commission does not need to repeat information that is reasonably accessible to you by other means. In this instance, the information is accessible online.

The Commission strives to be an open, transparent authority, and I trust that this information satisfies your request.

If you are not satisfied with this response, please note that the Commission operates a review procedure, details of which can be found on the Commission website at: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/freedom-information/make-a-freedom-information-request.

Please also note that if you have exhausted all internal Commission review procedures and you are still not satisfied you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. Details of this procedure can be found on the ICO website: https://ico.org.uk/.

Yours sincerely

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The Electoral Commission
electoralcommission.org.uk