

## Absent Vote Signature Refresh

Absent Voters (i.e. those who vote by post or proxy) have to provide a signature and their date of birth when they first apply.

When a person votes by post at an election they have to provide their signature and date of birth on a postal voting statement. These 'personal identifiers' are checked against those provided on the original postal vote application form, to ensure that they match. This helps prevent anyone else from using the vote fraudulently. If the identifiers do not match, the vote cannot be counted. Personal identifiers are always kept separate from the ballot paper, so no-one knows how a particular person has voted.

Since people's signatures and circumstances can change over time, an important part of these security measures is providing a fresh specimen signature every 5 years. By law, the Electoral Registration Officer has to carry out the first annual "refresh" of signatures by **31 January 2012**.

Therefore, a signature refresh form requesting your latest signature will be sent to anyone who has had a postal, proxy or postal proxy vote since January 2007.

Please look out for the form being sent to your address in January 2012 and make sure you sign and return it as soon as possible. Legally, we must send a reminder 3 weeks later to everyone who does not respond and it will reduce the costs of this exercise if as many forms as possible are returned before that stage is reached.

If you have a disability which means that you either cannot provide a signature or sign in a consistent and distinctive way, please indicate this on the form.

If you no longer want to vote by post please tick the relevant box on the form and return it to us as soon as possible in order to avoid unnecessary reminders.

If you do not return the signature refresh form by the deadline your existing absent vote facility will be cancelled and you will have to vote in person or make a new application.

This Absent Vote signature refresh exercise will be undertaken every January.