

County Council – 24 March 2026

Item 7 – Notice of Motion by Councillor Tutt

Digital ID Scheme.

1. Introduction

1.1 This briefing summarises:

- The government's initial mandatory digital ID scheme proposal
- The potential implementation of the scheme in practice.

2. Mandatory Digital ID Scheme

2.1 On 26 September 2025 the government announced plans to implement a mandatory digital ID verification scheme, which would be used to carry out right to work checks.

2.2 A digital ID is a digital representation of a person used to verify who they are or information about them both online and in face-to-face interactions. It often contains key information such as name, date of birth, and address and is connected to certain physical documents such as a passport or bank statement that can corroborate their identity. The reported benefits to a Digital ID include increased efficiency, reduced vulnerability to theft or fraud, and the potential for enhanced control over which data is revealed. Whilst the reported risks of a Digital ID are data breaches, surveillance, user profiling and potential exclusion of vulnerable or disconnected individuals. There are currently Digital ID schemes in place nationally and internationally, including UK based private sector voluntary digital ID schemes. These include services provided by firms such as E-Sign or TrustID whose customers include the NHS and Oxford City Council respectively amongst others.

2.3 In the initial announcement, the government set out the scheme positing it as a potential tool to help combat illegal working, streamline certain public services (such as driving licences, welfare etc.) and to introduce a mandatory form of identification for right to work checks.

2.4 Since then the government has made changes to the proposal following the expression of public and political concerns. The ID will now be an optional feature which residents can decide whether to hold. However, the government is still proceeding to make electronic right-to-work checks mandatory by 2029, but other mechanisms such as e-passports can be used in place of a mandated Digital ID.

3. The potential implementation of the Scheme

3.1 The government is currently undertaking public consultation on the direction of the scheme and future legislation that may be used to implement the scheme. However, although not yet finalised the UK government's official press release, explainer, and statements suggest the system will have the following features.

3.2 The digital ID will be free to download and stored 'securely' in the Gov.UK Wallet app, it will be stored on an individual's device, similarly to the NHS App or contactless payment cards. The ID will contain an individual's name, date of birth, nationality or residency status,

and a photo and will verify their identity and right to residency. No central database of personal data will exist, instead each government department will retain its own relevant data in a federated system, and the ID system will be able to draw from these separate databases as required. The stored information will be securely encrypted and will include authentication processes; the information can also only be shared with the individual's approval. The sharing of data will be transparent and at the user's discretion and the right to access the information can be easily revoked in the instance that a device is lost or stolen. The data system will also not be able to survey or track an individual's location or activities, and the ID itself cannot be requested by police officers.

3.3 The government has confirmed its intention to make the digital ID as accessible as possible. The government expressed they will look to ensure that there are provisions in place for people who lack proof of identity, and that they intend to ensure physical alternatives are available for those without smartphones. The digital ID app would also include assistive technology to support users with disabilities or accessibility needs.

3.4 Due to the government reverting on their requirement for the digital ID to be mandatory, it will be at the individual's discretion whether they subscribe to the digital ID. Consequently, there will be no requirement to carry a digital ID on your person, in the same way there is no requirement to carry a form of identification physically. In the event that an individual opts to use a digital ID, the government will be able to use the ID to prove an individual's right to work legally. This will be one of the primary uses for the ID, as it allows for a reduction in wait times when filling out identity verification forms and documents, can cut out the need for manual checks and paperwork, and could also streamline access to information where it is stored in one location. The government has indicated that other core uses would include, an improvement in access to public services such as education and social benefits, a reduction in identity fraud and streamlining verification processes. It is intended that the Digital ID will eventually be used for other services such as proof of identity when voting and enabling digital checks and verification when opening bank accounts or proving age.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The government's approach to the digital ID scheme has shifted from its original plan for mandatory participation to an optional system, following public and political opposition. While holding a digital ID will no longer be compulsory, the government still intends to require digital electronic right-to-work checks, allowing alternatives such as e-passports for compliance.

Background Information

The government announced their initial proposal. Press release available at: [New digital ID scheme to be rolled out across UK - GOV.UK](#), Further details available at: [Digital ID scheme: explainer - GOV.UK](#)