

REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 16 JUNE 2014

REPORT ON: IMPLEMENTATION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

REPORT BY: ASSESSOR

REPORT NO: TVJB 13-2014

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to update members on a number of changes required in connection with the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in Scotland.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- (i) Note arrangements for the Board to join the Government's Secure Public Services Network (PSN).
- (ii) Approve the appointment of a temporary IT Assistant & two Modern Apprentices and the use of overtime to assist with the transition to Individual Electoral Registration.
- (iii) Note the funding arrangements for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The additional costs of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) will be met by the UK Cabinet Office. The agreed level of funding for Tayside Valuation Joint Board for the financial year 2014/15 is £139,165.

In addition to the agreed funding noted above, the costs of installing the required PSN/DIA connections (£15,155) will be met in full by the Cabinet Office as will the rental cost of the network connections during the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16 (£34,128pa). The Board may however be required to fund the cost of maintaining a secure internet connection in the financial year 2016/17 and beyond.

The cost of appointing a temporary IT Assistant and two Modern Apprentices and the cost of overtime to meet the additional workloads arising during the transition to Individual Electoral Registration will be met from the 2014/15 funding shown above.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment. There are no major issues.

5 BACKGROUND

5.1 In June 2011 the UK Government announced that the way individuals register to vote in the UK will change to a system of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Following a lengthy period of preparatory work and a comprehensive review of progress, the UK Minister for Cities and the Constitution has confirmed that the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration will commence in Scotland on 19 September 2014 (i.e. immediately following the Referendum on Scottish Independence).

- 5.2 The new system of individual registration will require electors to complete an individual application form providing details of their date of birth and National Insurance number. Only once these details are “matched” to information held by the Department of Work and Pensions, or other appropriate sources, will the elector be added to the Electoral Register.
- 5.3 Under the new system the Electoral Registration Officer will issue an annual Household Enquiry Form to households. The Electoral Registration Officer is also required to issue a reminder to any property where the Household Enquiry Form is not returned and, if the reminder is not returned, the Electoral Registration Officer must undertake a doorstep canvass of that property. On receipt of a completed Household Enquiry Form the Electoral Registration Officer will issue an Invitation to Register Form to any individual who has not previously been matched with the Department of Work and Pensions database. Again the Electoral Registration Officer must issue a reminder form and, if necessary, undertake a doorstep canvass.
- 5.4 The main practical effects of the change to the new system are that considerably more forms and letters will be issued to electors and that the system will be somewhat more complicated for both electors and administrators.

6.0 PROPOSED CHANGES

6.1 Secure Internet Connections:

6.1.1 The successful implementation of Individual Electoral Registration is dependent upon the Electoral Registration Officer’s ability to check elector’s details against the information held by the Department of Work and Pensions. In order to access that information it will be necessary for the Board to maintain both government approved standards of data security and secure internet (PSN) connections to the UK Government’s Digital Service.

6.1.2 In preparation for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration the Cabinet Office has assessed Tayside Valuation Joint Board’s data security arrangements and a number of changes have been implemented. The Cabinet Office will also install secure PSN/DIA connections from each of the three Divisional Offices and assist the Board to gain the necessary PSN accreditation.

6.1.3 The secure internet PSN/DIA connections will be supplied by the Cabinet Office via a two year contract with Vodafone Plc to install and provide these services. Both the installation costs (£15,155) and the annual contract costs (£34,128pa) will be met by the Cabinet Office for the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16. However, it should be noted that the Board will require to maintain an appropriate PSN connection in the years beyond that period.

6.2 Appointment of Temporary IT Assistant, Modern Apprentices and the Use of Overtime:

6.2.1 The implementation of Individual Electoral Registration is currently placing considerable demands upon the Board’s IT section, particularly in connection with meeting the criteria for PSN compliance, and consequently a backlog of work has developed. In order to meet this increased workload it is proposed to engage a temporary IT Assistant for a period of 4 – 6 months, commencing in July 2014. The temporary IT Assistant will be based at the Board’s Headquarters in Dundee.

6.2.2 Individual Electoral Registration will require additional Household Enquiry Forms, Invitation to Register Forms and other correspondence to be issued to the public and returned to the Electoral Registration Officer. These forms are of a statutory design and are A3 in size, resulting in a longer processing time than the existing A4 forms used for canvass purposes. There will also be an increased number of enquiries from members of the electorate as they adapt to the new registration system. In order to assist with these additional workloads it is proposed to engage two modern apprentices for a period of one year commencing in July 2014. One of these modern apprentices will be based at the Board's office in Perth and the other at the Board's office in Forfar.

6.2.3 In addition to the above it is proposed to make use of overtime as required, in particular for Electoral and IT staff, in order to meet the additional workloads.

6.2.4 Funding for these temporary posts and for the use of overtime will be met from the allocation of funds provided by the Cabinet Office.

6.3 Funding Arrangements:

6.3.1 Details of the additional funding agreed with the Cabinet Office in respect of the costs of transition to Individual Electoral Registration during the financial year 2014/15 are shown below. The required funding for the financial year 2015/16 is expected to be considered by the Cabinet Office during October 2014.

Allocated top up funding for the financial year 2014/15	£ 98,316*
Additional hardware funding	£ 22,467
Maximising Registration Funding (allocated during 2013/14)	<u>£ 18,382</u>
Total	£139,165

* This agreed level of top up funding for the implementation of IER is conditional upon existing levels of funding provided by constituent Councils being maintained.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Clerk and Treasurer to the Board, together with the Head of Human Resources, Dundee City Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

ALASTAIR KIRKWOOD
Assessor

June 2014