

REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 22 AUGUST 2016

REPORT ON: INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

REPORT BY: ASSESSOR

REPORT NO: TVJB 19-2016

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to update members on the conclusion of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the outcome of performance monitoring undertaken by the Electoral Commission.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Board note:

- The transition to IER was completed on 1 December 2015 and carry forward electors were removed from the Register on that date.
- The Electoral Commission has assessed the Board's performance during the transition to IER and has determined that the Board has met the required standards.
- The UK Government is expected to meet the ongoing additional cost of IER for the period of the existing Parliament, albeit on a reducing basis as mechanisms to reduce these additional costs are sought.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The administrative costs of the new system of IER are estimated to be approximately £172,000 per annum higher than under the previous system. The UK Government, through the Cabinet Office, has met and continues to meet these additional costs at the present time. The Cabinet Office has indicated that it anticipates being able to continue to meet these additional costs during the life of the current UK Parliament, albeit on a reducing basis as initiatives are developed to reduce the overall cost.

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 THE INTRODUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

5.1 A new system of Individual Electoral Registration was introduced by the UK Government under The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and transition to the system commenced in England and Wales on 10 July 2014. Due to the impending Scottish Independence Referendum the transition to Individual Registration commenced in Scotland from 19 September 2014.

5.2 In order to make the transition to the new IER process as straightforward as possible, the UK Government put special arrangements in place for existing electors who were previously entered on the Register, and whose identity could be matched to information held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), to be automatically "pass-ported" into the new IER based Electoral Register. These electors each received an individual confirmation letter advising them that they did not need to take any further action.

- 5.3 Electors who were not successfully matched were asked to complete a new Invitation to Register (ITR) application form to provide the necessary details, including their date of birth and National Insurance Number. On receipt of completed applications these details were submitted for confirmation to the DWP and/or other data sources before the elector was added to the IER based Register. Where necessary two reminder ITR forms were issued and a doorstep canvass was undertaken.
- 5.4 Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) were issued to all households where there were no or incomplete details of the electors who may be resident in the property. Again, where no response was received, two reminder forms were issued and a doorstep canvass was undertaken.
- 5.5 As an additional safeguard special provision was made that existing electors, who had responded to the previous annual canvass but had not been matched to DWP data, and who failed to respond to the above forms, would be “carried forward”.
- 5.6 The introduction of IER was undertaken by 27 February 2015 and the first IER based Electoral Register was successfully published on that date. Following publication a “Household Notification Letter” was issued to households identifying all electors included in Register at that address and inviting any residents who were not included to contact the Electoral Registration Officer or to make an application.
- 5.7 The UK Parliamentary General Election of 7 May 2015 was the first election to be held utilising the new IER based Electoral Register (supplemented by carry forward electors).
- 5.8 Canvass work continued throughout 2015 with a full issue of HEFs to all households during the Autumn canvass period, followed by the issue of ITR forms where required. Where no response was received to either a HEF or an ITR form two reminders were issued and a doorstep visit undertaken.
- 5.9 Subsequent to the UK Parliamentary Election on 7 May 2015, the UK Government determined that the special “carry forward” provision should cease with effect from 1 December 2015 and this was reflected in the Electoral Register published on that date and any carry forward electors were removed. The transition to IER was therefore effectively completed on that date.

6 THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

- 6.1 The administrative costs of the new system of IER are significantly higher than under the previous system. At the current time the additional costs for Tayside Valuation Joint Board are estimated to be in the region of £172,000 per annum.
- 6.2 The UK Government, through the Cabinet Office, has met and continues to meet these additional costs at the present time. The Cabinet Office has indicated that it anticipates being able to meet these additional costs during the life of the current UK Parliament, albeit on a reducing basis as initiatives are developed to reduce the overall cost.
- 6.3 In order to reduce the overall costs of IER, the UK Government has undertaken a review of the system and various pilot exercises have been identified, some of which are underway and others are expected to commence in the coming years. The stated aim of the Government is to seek to reduce these additional costs to the pre-existing levels although it is not immediately apparent that this will be achievable.

7 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

7.1 The Electoral Commission was formally charged with monitoring and reporting upon the transition to Individual Electoral Registration. The Commission set two performance standards for all Electoral Registration Officers:

Performance Standard 1: Planning for Transition

Performance Standard 2: Delivering the Transition

7.2 In order to assess the progress of each Electoral Registration Officer the Commission requested extensive data at regular intervals and this information was supplied as requested. The Commission has now completed its analysis of that data and has concluded that Tayside Valuation Joint Board has met both the required performance standards. I would wish to extend my sincere thanks to all members of staff who worked extremely diligently, often under extreme pressure, in order to achieve this.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Clerk and Treasurer to the Board have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

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Assessor

August 2016