

REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 17 NOVEMBER 2014

**REPORT ON: ELECTORAL REGISTRATION –
INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION**

REPORT BY: ASSESSOR

REPORT NO: TVJB 27-2014

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to update members on recent electoral registration issues relating to the Introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- Note that Individual Electoral Registration commenced in Scotland with effect from 19 September 2014.
- Note that an initial pre-confirmation match of existing electors to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) database has resulted in 173,723 electors being automatically “pass-ported” into the new IER based Electoral Registers which will be published on 27 February 2014.
- Note that individual Invitation to Register forms have been issued to all existing electors who have not been successfully matched and that Household Enquiry Forms have been issued to all households where there are no or incomplete details of the electors who may reside at that property.
- Note that the required installation and configuration work to install the required PSN internet connections and associated network changes is ongoing.
- Note the funding arrangements.

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 this level of funding the UK Cabinet Office has agreed to meet the costs of installing the required PSN/DIA connections (£15,155), the rental cost of the network connections during the financial years 2014/15 and 2015/16 (£34,128 per annum) and the costs of required network changes (£65,585). The Board may however be required to fund the cost of maintaining a secure internet connection together with any additional costs of undertaking Individual Electoral Registration in the financial years 2016/17 and beyond.

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 INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

5.1 A detailed briefing note on the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in the Angus and Perth and Kinross Council Areas has been prepared and provided to the two constituent Councils. A copy of this briefing note is attached as Appendix.

- 5.2 Individual Electoral Registration was introduced in Scotland immediately after the Scottish Independence Referendum which took place on 18 September 2014. In practice this means that any registration applications received by the Electoral Registration Officer on or before 17 September 2014 were dealt with under the old procedure and those electors were included in the monthly update to the Register which was effective from 1 October 2014. Any registration applications received by the Electoral Registration Officer on or after the 18 of September 2014 will be subject to the new IER processes.
- 5.3 The introduction of IER is to be completed by 28 February 2015. This means that the next Electoral Register which will be published will be an IER based Register and will come into effect on 28 February 2015.

6 THE TRANSITION TO THE IER

- 6.1 In order to make the transition to the new IER process as straightforward as possible, the UK Government has put special transition arrangements in place for existing electors who are currently entered on the Register. These measures include a pre-confirmation match of the existing Electoral Register to DWP and other sources of data.
- 6.2 Electors who are appropriately matched to this data will be automatically “pass-ported” into the new IER based Electoral Register. These electors will simply receive a confirmation letter advising them that they have been included in the new IER based Register and that they do not need to take any further action.
- 6.3 Electors who are not successfully matched will be 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 these details will be submitted for confirmation to the DWP and/or other data sources before the elector is added to the IER based Register.
- 6.4 In the Angus Council area 76,437 electors were matched to the DWP database. In the Perth & Kinross Council area 97,286 electors were successfully matched. These electors will be “pass-ported” into the new IER based Register. Confirmation letters were issued to these electors on 22 October 2014.
- 6.5 Invitation to Register (ITR) forms seeking the required registration information, including date of birth and National Insurance numbers, were issued to all unmatched electors on 22 October 2014. In the Angus Council area 6,411 ITRs were issued. In the Perth and Kinross area 9,408 ITRs were issued.
- 6.6 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. 11,794 HEFs were issued to households in the Angus Council area and 15,754 HEFs were issued in the Perth and Kinross Council area.

7 SPECIAL CARRY FORWARD PROVISION

- 7.1 There is a special carry forward procedure for any electors who responded to the last annual canvass (held during October 2013 – March 2014) but who fail to return their ITR form. These electors will be retained on the new IER based Electoral Register for a short period of time. This is currently set at 1 December 2016 but the UK Government has indicated that this deadline may be brought forward to 1 December 2015. Any existing elector who has not been matched and who has failed to successfully return an ITR form at that stage will be deleted from the Register.

8 SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR POSTAL VOTERS

- 8.1 There is a special provision which affects existing postal voters. In essence the ability to vote by post will be removed from anyone who is unmatched and who fails to successfully complete an IER application before 27 February 2014.
- 8.2 Notices highlighting that absent vote facilities may be lost were issued to 943 electors in the Angus Council area. 1,638 notices were issued to electors in the Perth and Kinross Council area.

9 ON-LINE REGISTRATION

- 9.1 A key feature of the new IER process is that electors will be able to register on-line. A dedicated Government website has been created for this purpose and this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>. Both the UK Government and the ERO would request that users are directed to this website wherever possible. However, if required electors can return their details to the ERO on paper forms or by telephone.

10 RE-NAMING OF THE (FULL) ELECTORAL REGISTER & OPEN (EDITED) REGISTER

- 10.1 As part of the preparations for IER the UK Government has taken the opportunity to re-name both the "Full" Electoral Register and the "Edited" Electoral Register. From 19 September 2014 onwards the Full Register will be known simply as the "Electoral Register" and the Edited Register will be known as the "Open Register".
- 10.2 The re-naming of the two Registers is accompanied by revised wording which is designed to make the distinction between the two Registers more clear and to assist electors to make an informed choice as to whether they wish to be included in the Open Register or not. This revised wording is included in the majority of letters and forms that are to be issued for IER purposes.
- 10.3 It is apparent that the revised name and wording has been extremely successful in alerting electors to the differences between the registers and this has resulted in an extremely high volume of telephone calls and emails from electors who wish to be removed from the Open Register.

11 IER PUBLICITY

- 11.1 A national awareness campaign giving details of the move to the IER procedure will be lead by the Electoral Commission. This will encompass television and other advertising and will take place from Mid October 2014 – Mid November 2014.
- 11.2 Local advertising will be undertaken by the ERO in newspapers, by twitter and via local community organisations. A specific internet advertisement will be placed on the Courier internet site in conjunction with Dundee City Council.

12 SECURE INTERNET CONNECTIONS

- 12.1 The successful matching of existing electors to the DWP database has been undertaken using secure Public Sector Network (PSN) internet connections provided by the UK Cabinet Office. Work to install these connections, together with the necessary network changes, whilst sufficient for the purposes of the initial match, is still ongoing.

13 FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 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.

- Allocated top up funding for the financial year 2014/15, additional hardware funding and Maximising Registration Funding £139,165
- Cost of installing PSN connections £15,155
- Cost of required network changes £65,585
- PSN/DIA Line rental (per annum) £34,128

13.2 The required funding for the financial year 2015/16 is expected to be considered by the Cabinet Office during October 2014.

14 CONSULTATION

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

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 None.

Alastair Kirkwood
Assessor

November 2014

Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

Briefing Note

1 GENERAL

- 1.1 Individual Electoral Registration (IER) has been introduced to the UK by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, which made the necessary amendments to the Representation of the People Act 1983, and supporting Regulations.
- 1.2 The principal change in moving to the new Individual Electoral Registration system is that the former practice of issuing a single canvass form to each household, which could be signed and returned by any member of the household on behalf of all eligible electors at that address, and thereafter those electors added to the Register, has been discontinued.
- 1.3 Under the new IER system, although a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) will be issued annually to ingather the details of the eligible electors' resident within a household, a separate, additional, individual application will require to be completed by each elector. Each application must include the elector's national insurance number and date of birth. Before the application is accepted the ERO will require to confirm these details with information held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), or certain other sources (e.g. Council Tax records), in order to confirm the identity of the elector. Only when these details have been confirmed will the elector be added to the Register.
- 1.4 It should be noted that electors will not be required to complete an application to register every year. Once an elector has been successfully added to the Electoral Register they may remain on the Register without making a fresh application as long as the ERO has information to confirm that they remain resident at that address (e.g. from a completed Household Enquiry Form). However, if the elector changes address, or is otherwise removed from the Register for any reason, then a fresh application (including the provision of National Insurance Number and Date of Birth) will be required before they can be re-registered.

2 DATE OF COMING INTO EFFECT

- 2.1 IER came into effect in England and Wales on 10 June 2014. However, in Scotland its introduction was delayed until after the Scottish Independence Referendum which took place on 18 September 2014.
- 2.2 In practice this means that any registration application received by the ERO on or before 17 September 2014 is dealt with under the old procedure and these electors will be included in the monthly update to the Register which is effective from 1 October 2014. Any registration applications received by the ERO on or after the 18 of September 2014 will be subject to the new IER processes.
- 2.3 The introduction of IER is to be completed by 28 February 2015. This means that the next Electoral Register which will be published will be an IER based Register and will come into effect on or before 28 February 2015.

3 THE TRANSITION TO THE IER

- 3.1 In order to make the transition to the new IER process as straightforward as possible, the UK Government has put special transition arrangements in place for existing electors who are currently entered on the Register. These measures include a pre-confirmation match of the existing Electoral Register to DWP and other sources of data.

- 3.2 Electors who are appropriately matched to this data will be automatically “pass-ported” into the new IER based Electoral Register. These electors will simply receive a confirmation letter advising them that they have been included in the new IER based Register and that they do not need to take any further action.
- 3.3 Electors who are not successfully matched will be asked to complete a new Invitation to Register (ITR) application form to provide the necessary details, including date of birth and national insurance number. On receipt these details will be submitted for confirmation to the DWP and/or other data sources before the elector is added to the IER based Register.

4 THE MATCHING PROCESS

- 4.1 There are a few major issues that arise from the matching process.
- 4.2 Firstly, it should be highlighted that the ERO does not have access to the DWP data. In practice the ERO will send the elector’s details to the DWP who will confirm whether it matches the data it holds or not.
- 4.3 The DWP dataset is not wholly comprehensive. In many cases whether an individual is matched or not will depend upon the last time (if ever) that individual had contact with the DWP. The practical effect of this is that some individuals will be successfully matched whilst others will, through no fault of their own, be unmatched. It is simply a matter of what data is held where and the currency of that data.
- 4.4 Experience has shown that even within the same household some individuals will be matched and others will be unmatched – e.g. it will not be uncommon for a husband to be matched whilst his wife is unmatched or vice versa. The ERO has no facility for querying why this has occurred but must accept the match information supplied by DWP.
- 4.5 The impact of this will be that, even within the same household, some individuals may receive a confirmation letter whilst others may receive an Invitation to Register (ITR) form.
- 4.6 There is no way to circumvent this process, all those who receive an ITR form are required to complete and return it to the ERO.

5 SPECIAL CARRY FORWARD PROVISION

- 5.1 There is a special carry forward procedure for any electors who responded to the last annual canvass (held during October 2013 – March 2014) but who fail to return their ITR form. These electors will be retained on the new IER based Electoral Register for a short period of time. This is currently set at 1 December 2016 but the UK Government has indicated that this deadline may be brought forward to 1 December 2015. Any existing elector who has not been matched and who has failed to successfully return an ITR form at that stage will be deleted from the Register.

6 SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR POSTAL VOTERS

- 6.1 It should be noted that there is a special provision which affects existing postal voters. In essence the ability to vote by post will be removed from anyone who is unmatched and who fails to successfully complete an IER application before 27 February 2015.

7 ON-LINE REGISTRATION

- 7.1 A key feature of the new IER process is that electors will be able to register on-line. A dedicated Government website has been created for this purpose and this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

7.2 The new on-line registration service is available now. It is particularly quick and simple to use and has many advantages for the elector in terms of the time and complexity required to complete the registration process, i.e. as compared the more lengthy and complicated procedure to complete paper forms. The UK Government is keen to promote the use of this service and this is being heavily advertised in IER documentation and elsewhere in the media.

7.3 Both the UK Government and the ERO would request that users are directed to this website wherever possible. However, if required electors can return their details to the ERO on paper forms or by telephone.

8 RE-NAMING OF THE (FULL) ELECTORAL REGISTER & OPEN (EDITED) REGISTER

8.1 As part of the preparations for IER the UK Government has taken the opportunity to re-name both the "Full" Electoral Register and the "Edited" Electoral Register. From 19 September 2014 onwards the Full Register will be known simply as the "Electoral Register" and the Edited Register will be known as the "Open Register".

8.2 The re-naming of the two Registers is accompanied by revised wording which is designed to make the distinction between the two Registers more clear and to assist electors to make an informed choice as to whether they wish to be included in the Open Register or not. This revised wording is included in the majority of letters and forms that are to be issued for IER purposes.

8.3 It is apparent from the experience of EROs in England and Wales that the re-naming and revised wording has been successful in better informing the electorate. A considerable volume of telephone calls and correspondence has been received from electors wishing to change their option. Any such requests should be directed to the ERO.

8.4 Another change that has been introduced is that an elector's choice as to whether to be included in the Open Register may now be carried forward from year to year.

9 CANVASS PROCESS, AND TIMETABLE OCTOBER 2014 – FEBRUARY 2015

9.1 The canvass process for introducing IER during the period October 2014 – February 2015 will generally be broken down according to the following timetable.

***22 October 2014** – 1st bulk issue including:

Confirmation Letters
Invitation to Register Forms
Household Enquiry Forms

***18/19 November 2014** – 2nd bulk issue including:

New Confirmation Letters
New Invitation to Register Forms
New Household Enquiry Forms
1st Reminder Invitation to Register Forms
1st Reminder Household Enquiry Forms

***8/9 December 2014** – 3rd bulk issue including:

New Confirmation Letters
New Invitation to Register Forms
New Household Enquiry Forms
1st Reminder Invitation to Register Forms
1st Reminder Household Enquiry Forms
2nd Reminder Invitation to Register Forms (Hand delivered by personal canvasser)
2nd Reminder Household Enquiry Forms (Hand delivered by personal canvasser)

12 January 2015 – 27 February 2015 – Weekly issue of above forms as required.

27 February 2015 – New IER based Electoral Register Published.

* Note the above dates may be subject to change.

- 9.2 It will be noted from the above that the canvass process will be somewhat more complicated than under the previous system of electoral registration. Apart from the issue of confirmation letters, the speed at which the various steps are taken will depend upon the speed of the response from the elector.
- 9.3 For example, in one house the elector may receive a HEF and return it to the ERO timeously. He or she will then be issued with an ITR form which they may again return timeously and thereafter they may be entered on the Electoral Register. By contrast the occupant of the house next door may fail to return his HEF and will therefore be issued with a first reminder HEF at the same time as his neighbour is receiving an ITR form. Should the same household fail to return the first reminder HEF then they will be issued with a second reminder HEF which will be hand delivered by a personal canvasser. It is only when the HEF is returned to the ERO that individual ITRs can be issued to the occupants.
- 9.4 Again, assuming there are several occupants in the household then one may return their ITR timeously and be entered on the Electoral Register whilst another may only respond after the first ITR reminder is issued, a third may fail to respond to the first ITR reminder and will subsequently have a second ITR reminder delivered by hand by a personal canvasser.

10 IER FORMS AND LETTERS

There are many varieties of forms and letters that will be used as part of the IER process. However, examples of the three principal types of forms and letters that will be issued by the ERO during the period 22 October – December 2014. These are:

- a) **Confirmation letters**
These will be issued to all existing electors who have been successfully matched. The letter will be varied to reflect whether the elector is included in the Open Register or not.
- b) **Invitation to Register (ITR) Forms**
These will be issued to all electors currently on the Register who have not been successfully matched. There is a second version which will be issued to potential electors identified from Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) or from other sources.
- c) **Household Enquiry Forms (HEF)**
HEFs will be issued to all households where the ERO has no or incomplete details of eligible electors who reside at that address. There are two versions of the form, one which can be pre-populated with elector details where known and another which is blank to be populated by one of the occupants.

It should be noted that in many instances the style and content of the form required is statutorily prescribed.

11 DELETIONS FROM THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

- 11.1 In conjunction with introducing IER, the UK Government has also tightened the processes for removal of electors from the Register. As a general rule two pieces of corroborating information are required before an elector may be removed.

12 CIVIL PENALTIES

- 12.1 In addition to issuing statutory forms e.g. Household, Enquiry Forms, Invitation to Register forms etc, the ERO has discretionary power, after invitation and encouragement, to formally require people to make applications, and may impose a civil penalty on anyone who doesn't respond to a requirement.

13 ROLLING REGISTRATION UNDER IER

Rolling Registration is a process whereby electors can apply to be added to the Electoral Register at any time of year, even after the traditional annual canvass has been completed. This procedure will continue largely as before however any applications will require to be made under the new IER process and must include details of the elector's national insurance number and date of birth. These details will be confirmed with the DWP and/or other data sources before the elector is added to the Register.

The easiest way to make a rolling registration application is to do so on-line using the Government's dedicated website at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

14 IER PUBLICITY

A national awareness campaign giving details of the move to the IER procedure will be lead by the Electoral Commission. This will encompass both television and other advertising and will take place from Mid October 2014 – Mid November 2014.

Local advertising will be undertaken by the ERO in newspapers, by twitter and via local community organisations. A specific internet advertisement will be placed on the Courier internet site in conjunction with Dundee City Council and we are seeking to provide advertising on buses etc.