

REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 27 JANUARY 2014

REPORT ON: IMPLEMENTATION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

REPORT BY: ASSESSOR

REPORT NO: TVJB 7-2014

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to advise members of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration in Scotland and the timetable for implementation

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- (i) Note that 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.
- (ii) Note the postponement of the 2013 annual household canvass and the revised publication dates for the updated Electoral Registers.
- (iii) Note the current stage of preparations for the introduction on Individual Electoral Registration.
- (iv) Note that the Assessor, in conjunction with the Clerk and Treasurer, will give consideration to securing the services of an appropriate provider to undertake the work of producing and issuing Electoral Enquiry Forms.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Funding for the additional costs of the transition to IER is being met by the UK Cabinet Office.

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 recently confirmed that the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration will commence in Scotland on 19 September 2014 (ie immediately following the Referendum on Scottish Independence).

5.2 The principal change in moving to the new electoral registration system is that, from 19 September 2014, people will no longer be able to apply to register to vote as a household. Instead, everyone will apply as an individual, providing evidence of their identity such as national insurance number and date of birth. This change is intended to ensure that each individual is in control of their own democratic rights and that the process is quicker, easier and more secure.

- 5.3 Confirmation of each elector's identity will be verified by cross checking the individual's details with information held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) or other data sources.
- 5.4 To make the transition to IER in 2014 as easy as possible those electors who responded to the 2013/14 canvass (or whose details were verified from other data sources) will be matched against the DWP database. Electors whose details do match will be automatically transferred to the new IER register and these electors will not require to do anything else to remain on the register.
- 5.5 Those electors who cannot be matched to the DWP database or other data sources will be invited to apply to register individually. Such applications will require to include the applicant's national insurance number and date of birth. Provision has been made to allow applications to be submitted via the internet.
- 5.6 In light of a concern that some electors may be disenfranchised for the UK Parliamentary Elections scheduled for 2015, electors who responded to the 2013/14 canvass but who have not been matched and who fail to register under the new system will have their registration details "carried forward", thereby ensuring that they remain registered to vote. However, any such electors who continue not to be matched or fail to register to vote individually will be removed from the register no later than the Autumn of 2016.
- 5.7 It should be noted that existing postal or proxy voters who have not been matched will each need to register individually or they will lose the right to use this method of voting and will be required to attend a polling station to cast their vote in 2015. Anyone who has moved house or changed their name will also be required to register individually under the new system.

6.0 POSTPONEMENT OF THE 2013 ANNUAL CANVASS AND REVISED PUBLICATION DATES

- 6.1 In order to ensure that the electoral register is as complete as possible prior to undertaking the match with DWP data, and thereby ensure that the maximum number of electors can be transferred directly into the new register, legislation was passed to delay the 2013/14 canvass and publication of the new register slightly. This canvass therefore commenced on 1 October 2013 and the new electoral register will be published no later than 10 March 2014.
- 6.2 The introduction of IER will commence on 19 September 2014 and, following the completion of data matching with the DWP and the first canvass to be undertaken under the new procedures, the revised (IER) register will be published no later than 28 February 2015.

7.0 PREPARATIONS FOR IER

- 7.1 Preparations for the introduction of IER are progressing satisfactorily and detailed project planning, risk assessment and process mapping has been undertaken with the assistance of both the Cabinet Office and the Electoral Commission. At the current stage all milestones have been achieved and all matters, including training provision, are progressing according to plan.
- 7.2 The Electoral Commission is working closely with Electoral Registration Officers and their teams in the delivery of IER and has published detailed guidance. It is also working closely with Electoral Registration Officers to develop a public awareness strategy which will run alongside the national campaign to ensure that members of the public have the information about the changes to the registration system and what they need to do to register to vote.

- 7.3 The Electoral Commission are also responsible for determining performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers and have developed a new framework which will be used to assess how well the challenges of the transition to IER are met by Electoral Registration Officers.
- 7.4 A Confirmation Dry Run (CDR) has taken place whereby, on a test basis, the existing electoral registers have been matched to the DWP database. The results of this test indicate that around 78% of existing electors will be successfully matched. (Perth & Kinross 77.71%, Angus 79.1%). It is anticipated that additional local matching will increase this match rate to approximately 85%
- 7.5 It should be noted however that this is a challenging exercise in some respects, particularly with regard to IT development. The UK Cabinet Office has commissioned the required changes to the Board's electoral management system directly from our third party supplier. Considerable work has already been undertaken in order to comply with Cabinet Office data security compliance standards and further consideration is currently being given as to whether the Board should join the Government Secure Exchange (GSX/PSN) internet network.

8.0 PRODUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION FORMS

- 8.1 At the Board meeting of 9 May 2011, the Board approved the use of Adare Ltd, third party suppliers, to undertake the work of producing and issuing Electoral Canvass Enquiry Forms for the canvass periods up to and including the 2013 annual canvass.
- 8.2 In preparation for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration, the Assessor will, in conjunction with the Clerk and Treasurer, now give consideration to securing the services an appropriate provider to produce and issue Individual Electoral Enquiry Forms and will report to the Board accordingly.

9.0 TIMETABLE

- 9.1 The timetable for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration necessarily inter-acts with the timetables for the European Parliament Election, the Referendum on Scottish Independence and the UK Parliamentary Election. The principal events are noted below:-

1 October 2013 to 9 March 2014	Household Canvass including 16 & 17 year olds for the Referendum on Scottish Independence.
10 March 2014	Publication of the Revised Register. Production of Young Person's Register for Scottish Referendum on Independence (not for publication).
22 May 2014	European Elections.
18 September 2014	Scottish Referendum on Independence.
19 September 2014 onwards	Implementation of IER. Existing electoral registers matched against DWP records. IER Canvass commences. - Confirmed (matched) Electors advised. - Electors not matched invited to apply. All new applications to register must be made individually.

28 February 2015	New (IER) Electoral Register published. Electors not matched or who have not applied to register carried forward.
May 2015	UK General Election.
July to November 2015	Annual Canvass. All new and "carry forward" electors invited to apply under IER.
December 2015	New Electoral Register published.
July to November 2016	Annual Canvass. All new and "carry forward" electors invited to apply under IER.
December 2016	New Electoral Register published. Those Electors not confirmed and who have not applied to re-register under IER removed from the Electoral Register.

10 CONSULTATIONS

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

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

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Assessor

January 2014