

REPORT TO: TAYSIDE VALUATION JOINT BOARD – 20 NOVEMBER 2023

REPORT ON: ELECTORAL REGISTRATION – ELECTIONS ACT

REPORT BY: ASSESSOR

REPORT NO: TVJB 25-2023

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report seeks to update the Joint Board on the latest additional duties requiring to be carried out by the Electoral Registration Officer following introduction of the Elections Act 2022. It should be noted that the changes referred to below only apply to UK Parliamentary General Elections and recall petitions.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Joint Board note that:

- The statutory instrument to implement changes to postal and proxy voting and introduce an online application service for these voting methods has been approved by Parliament.
- Postal Voting change. For UK Parliamentary General Elections and recall petitions, postal vote signature refresh arrangements are now limited to a maximum of 3 years, following which the elector will need to make a fresh application. This applies to any postal vote applications made after 31 October 2023. Transitional arrangements are in place – any postal voters with an existing arrangement in place prior to 31 October 2023 will not need to reapply until 31 January 2026. The existing 5 year refresh period for Scottish elections continues to apply.
- Proxy Voting change. For UK Parliamentary General Elections and recall petitions, the total number of electors for whom a person may act as a proxy for is now limited to four, of which no more than two can be for ‘domestic electors’ – i.e. an elector that is neither an overseas elector nor a service voter. This applies to any proxy vote appointments made after 31 October 2023. Transitional arrangements are in place – any proxy voters with an existing arrangement in place prior to 31 October 2023 will need to reapply for their proxy vote by 31 January 2024.
- Online Absent Vote Applications. The new online service to allow electors to apply for a postal or proxy vote online went live on 31 October 2023. On that date the ERO Portal, a service provided by the UK Government, began accepting applications (although paper applications continue to be available). Applications will be accessed by our staff who will determine and process them. At the date of writing this report no applications have been received as yet. Identity checking is now introduced for all absent vote applications other than those for emergency proxies. The online service and the identity verification requirements apply to UK Parliamentary General Elections and recall petitions only. For Scottish elections, paper application forms require to be completed.
- For public awareness purposes, the Electoral Commission has produced guidance on the above changes on the Electoral Commission website. Also, Register to Vote and How to Vote pages on GOV.UK now signpost to the online application service.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The UK Government has agreed to provide funding to reflect additional staff admin time, training, communication and engagement costs involved in implementing changes introduced as a result of the Elections Act. Total funding of £22,822 for 2023/24 has been allocated to the electoral registration function in the Angus Council and Perth and Kinross Council areas.

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 CONSULTATION

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

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 None.

ROY CHRISTIE
Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

November 2023