

PROGRESS OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Governance Committee – 20 October 2015

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Firth

Contact Officer(s) Christian Everett, Ext.7243

Recommendation to Governance Committee:

To note the progress of Individual Electoral Registration.

Introduction and Background

1. Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was introduced by the Cabinet Office in June 2014. This new system requires individual residents to provide their National Insurance Number (NINo) and Date of Birth (DoB) upon registering to vote. In doing so the system is more secure and reduces potential electoral fraud.

Annual Canvass 2015

2. In the period 3 August 2015 to 1 December 2015, Electoral Services are carrying out a statutory canvass of residential households to obtain current information on residency. This is the first ever full IER canvass. Every residential property has received a Household Enquiry Form (HEF) that seeks up to date information on residency. Any non-responders receive a reminder HEF and further, a door-knock from a personal canvasser who will encourage the return of information.
3. An automated online/Freephone/text service for the return of the information is available. This provides an alternative means to sending back the form and saves in return postage fees.
4. Each new resident listed on the HEF is required to complete a statutory Invitation to Register (ITR) form. Non responses to the ITR in the canvass period are also subject to reminder forms and a personal door-knock. The personal canvassing of ITRs is from 16 October 2015 to 6 November 2015. The ITR can be completed online.
5. The personal canvassing of HEFs commenced on 18 September 2015 and will be complete by 6 November 2015. 69% of HEFs were responded to, so canvassers are door-knocking on 31% of residential properties.

6. On 1 December 2015 the revised 2016 Register of Electors will be published by using information obtained in the canvass. All electors registered under IER on the existing register, will continue to be so.

Public Engagement

7. During the canvass, Electoral Services are visiting all 27 Care Homes in the district to provide a personal service and help facilitate the registration process.
8. A recent Order laid by the Minister responsible for IER requires the removal of any existing non-IER registered electors upon publication of the register on 1 December 2015. These electors have not responded to their previous ITRs. This currently represents 3.5% of existing registered electors.
9. The legislation requires that each non-IER registered elector must be sent a further ITR after 31 October. Since there is no guarantee of a response, the Minister has offered funding to specifically target these electors in addition to the ITR.
10. The Communications team have undertaken extensive work on the Council's website; making the annual canvass information prominent with a banner and link on the main homepage. Additionally, press releases have been sent to local media with a quote from the Portfolio Holder on the importance of registering to vote and publicity posters have been sent to Parish Clerks, libraries, leisure centres, schools, post offices, prominent businesses, churches, village halls and local pubs.

Projected cost of the IER Canvass

11. 2015 sees the first ever full IER Canvass. Nearly 50,000 residential properties have been sent a HEF. New residents within each household must also complete an ITR. In both cases legislation requires a reminder form and a personal canvass for non responders.
12. New legislation requires that both the HEF and ITR are printed double sided on A3 paper. Each must be housed within its own outgoing envelope, complete with a return envelope, thus making the new system more secure. The additional size and weight of the statutory forms and envelopes attracts additional postage costs.
13. A specialist electoral print supplier has had to be used to keep abreast of the variations of the forms, the statutory wording on the forms and the sheer volumes involved.
14. Canvassers, although paid at the same rate as previously, are visiting more properties due to double canvassing of HEFs and ITRs.
15. Appendix A sets out the detail of a currently projected overspend of £55,800 on the cost of the canvass.

Government Spending Review

16. Cabinet Office is currently undertaking a spending review on the cost of IER and the canvass. On 24 November Cabinet Office will release a paper indicating their decisions on IER spending for the next four years.

Key Implications

Financial

We are forecasting an over spend of £56k for the current financial year. A £40k growth item is being submitted for the 2016/17 budget.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

The implication of not funding the IER canvass to the required level creates a risk of not complying with our statutory obligations of canvassing residential properties.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

New legislation to canvass residential properties under IER introduces an additional financial burden on local authorities. A £40k growth item is proposed for the 2016/17 budget.

Appendices

Appendix A – Table and explanation of additional canvass costs.

Background Papers:

[Governance Committee - 26 February 2015, item 4 Individual Electoral Registration](#)

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