

21st March 2017

**To the Chair and Members of the
ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION – PROGRESS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides an update to Members on a number of key work streams being undertaken by the Electoral Services Team in relation to the Register of Electors and Annual Canvass.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Committee is asked to approve the report and make any additional comments in relation to the contents.

2016 ANNUAL CANVASS

4. The Annual Canvass commenced at the beginning of August 2016, which was shortly delayed due to the EU Referendum. At that point there were 135,650 properties in Doncaster and an electorate of 223,711. We sent out Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) to those 135,650 properties within Doncaster and received 69,902 (51.55%) responses at this 1st stage without any prompting (2015 we received 52,273 - 38.70%). Those responses came via the internet, post, text or telephone. Reminder letters were then issued to the 65,709 non responding properties and the response increased to 94,176 (69.45%) (2015 we received 81,781 - 61.29%). A further 2nd stage reminder was issued to 41,427 non-responding properties. During September to November canvassers were out door knocking and telephoning the remaining outstanding 37,319 non-responding properties.
5. We published our new full register on the 1st December 2016 and Doncaster's Electorate was 221,225. The register had grown by 4,678 electors since the last fully published register on 1st December 2015 when the electorate then was 216,547. As of the 1st March 2017 the full electorate was 222,590. A full electorate breakdown by ward is provided at Appendix A.

6. Breakdown of HEF responses by date and method compared to 2015

<u>Date</u>	<u>Total Properties</u>	<u>Total Retn</u>	<u>Total% Retn Rate</u>	<u>Outstanding Forms</u>	<u>Retns by Post</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Web</u>	<u>SMS</u>	<u>ERS Retn Total</u>	<u>% ERS</u>	<u>2015 total returns</u>	<u>2015 total % return rate</u>
17-Aug	135650	41,754	31.00%	93,875	21,859	6,648	8,704	4,498	19,850	14.63%		
23-Aug	135650	52,035	38.35%	83,615	30,040	7,160	9,854	4,912	21,926	16.16%	50,609	37.49%
26-Aug	135634	69,902	51.55%	65,709	47,202	7,332	10,196	5,056	22,584	16.65%	52,273	38.70%
5-Sep	135638	71,852	52.98%	63,758	47,806	7,644	10,915	5,371	23,930	17.64%	58,109	43.03%
12-Sep	135638	77,571	57.19%	58,039	50,372	8,425	12,030	6,580	27,035	19.93%	59,378	43.97%
19-Sep	135632	90,206	66.50%	45,398	58,030	9,361	14,238	8,275	31,874	23.50%	69,022	52.48%
26-Sep	135633	94,176	69.45%	41,427	61,140	9,500	14,667	8,509	32,676	24.10%	81,781	61.29%
3-Oct	135632	95,658	70.54%	39,944	61,928	9,619	15,013	8,723	33,355	24.59%	82,043	61.32%
10-Oct	135641	99,017	73.02%	36,584	64,752	9,693	15,261	8,896	33,850	24.95%	82,349	61.35%
24-Oct	135639	99,952	73.71%	35,647	65,540	9,713	15,333	8,939	33,985	25.05%	83,018	61.45%
7-Nov	135644	103,806	76.55%	31,792	68,857	9,766	15,548	9,136	34,450	25.39%	84,220	62.37%
10-Nov	135645	105,194	77.58%	30,403	70,049	9,795	15,632	9,193	34,620	25.52%	85,745	63.50%
14-Nov	135645	106,152	78.29%	29,444	70,783	9,825	15,740	9,263	34,828	25.67%	88,748	65.72%
21-Nov	135651	109,621	80.83%	25,998	73,745	9,895	15,973	9,431	35,299	26.02%	90,006	68.45%
30-Nov	135678	112,364	82.87%	23,230	76,216	10,494	16,103	9,921	35,518	26.17%	96,659	71.58%

7. To help increase the response to the annual canvass and ensure the Electoral Register was up to date accurate when publishing, Electoral Services were proactive to ensure the residents of Doncaster didn't lose their right to vote.

Telephone Canvassing

Due to the success of this last year we undertook a Telephone Canvass alongside the door knock canvass. This enabled us to contact those hard to reach areas/electors where door knocking was proving to be unsuccessful. At the same time we carried out an 'Invitation to Register' canvass to chase up the non-responding electors to try and obtain the information there and then over the phone; we also had a dedicated phone line for electors to call electoral services back with their information should they not have it to hand.

Care Homes & HMOs

We had dedicated Canvass Team Leaders canvassing every care home and housing with multiple occupancies (HMOs) within the borough by arranging an appointment with the Care Manager and/or Building Manager to build up a close working relationship to ensure we are kept up to date on the frequent residential changes.

Targeting hard to reach/unapproachable areas

Where necessary extra support and time was given to selective areas such as foreign nationals that may not understand how to complete the forms. SLHD have provided access to high rise flats and buildings where entry was

difficult for non-key holders. We also targeted any hard to reach areas by telephone.

School/Colleges

We are campaigning within Schools and Colleges through their social media links by providing schools with adverts and information to put on their social media to try and increase the number of attainers ready for when they reach voting age.

Social Media

The web team update social media, share and re-tweet information out to Doncaster residents from the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office.

#OurDay

Electoral Services took part in the Local Government Association #OurDay by submitting a team 'selfie' whilst carrying out Telephone Canvassing on the 15th November. This captured the team working hard to obtain those importing responses and also helped promote and encourage registering to vote.

CURRENT ELECTORAL PROACTIVE ACTIVITY

8. A proactive approach is required throughout the year and not just during the canvass period in order to maintain an accurate and complete register, ensuring as far as possible that all eligible persons are on the register and that all non-eligible persons are removed. To ensure this is met we are currently carrying out the following initiatives.

Electoral Commission Thunderclap

Social Media promoting #OnYourDoorstep – We are sharing videos to help highlight the role of local government, raising the awareness of our local elections and reminding people they need to register to vote. The first one took place on 7th March 2016. You can get involved too by registering at <https://www.thunderclap.it/projects/53207-onyourdoorstep> and let's ensure as many people across Doncaster as possible can have their say on Thursday 4th May!

Home movers

Working with the Council Tax department we are contacting any new home movers and encouraging/reminding them to ensure they remember to change addresses on the electoral register.

Contact Centre and one stop shop reception

The Contact Centre and the one stop shop in the Civic Office are asking customers if they are on the electoral register and registered to vote for the upcoming elections. They have a web based version of the electoral register which allows them to check if someone is registered, apply for postal vote or register them, there and then. This is encouraging people to register and help raise awareness of the upcoming combined elections taking place on May 4th.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. There are comprehensive statutory provisions covering the delivery of electoral registration activity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. Cabinet Office continues to supply funding towards electoral registration activity. An application for extra funding has been submitted to Cabinet Office towards the cost of Individual Electoral Registration activities during 2016/2017.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous Elections and Democratic Structures Committee reports

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Trina Barber
Electoral Services Manager
Legal & Democratic Services
Tel: 01302 734398
E-mail: Trina.Barber@doncaster.gov.uk

Jo Miller
Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer