

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

**ELECTORAL SERVICES UPDATE ON KEY ISSUES 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 preparing for Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the evaluation for the Register of Electors annual canvass and preparations for European and Local Government Elections.

**RECOMMENDATION**

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

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Terms of Reference of this Committee provide for taking an overview of electoral services issues. Set out below is the current position in respect of recent and current activity, preparing for Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the evaluation for the register of electors annual canvass and preparations for European and Local Government Elections.

**Individual Electoral Registration**

4. The key dates were included in the last report of 26th November 2013.
5. The Electoral Registration Officer now has the power to data match all other council records and electoral services are now investigating data matching with the Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) and council tax records prior to the confirmation live run on 25 June 2014 when the electoral register will be matched with the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and IER begins.
6. New legislation will require landlords to record the name and nationality of tenants.
7. If data matching identifies residents who are not registered to vote they cannot be added automatically but must be sent an invitation to register. If this is not returned reminders will be sent and a canvasser will visit to encourage registration.
8. Upon receipt of our results from the DWP in early July household enquiry forms (HEF) will be sent to those properties where no-one is registered and to households that electors were carried forward at the end of this canvass. Confirmation letters must be sent to electors who

do match with DWP records and invitations to register (ITR) must be sent to electors who do not match.

9. The Electoral Commission is launching a national campaign to run throughout July and the councils public engagement strategy is in development.
10. The Council's Electoral Services Manager, Linda Lawty will be preparing and delivering a presentation for Members detailing the transition to IER and the implications leading up to the elections in 2015. This will likely take place in April after preparations for the May elections are well underway.

### **Register of Electors Annual Canvass 2013/14**

11. The annual canvass was delayed from the summer of 2013 and has now concluded with the publication of the new Register of Electors on 17th February 2014.
12. Usually 2 temporary members of staff are employed to process canvass forms. However, this year improvements and efficiencies to the process meant the functions were all carried out by the elections team resulting in a saving being made.
13. The canvass process was improved with the aim of increasing accuracy to make the transition to IER as smooth as possible. The results are shown below:
  - the registration return achieved this year was 88.6% compared to 86% last year
  - the aim of achieving at least a 50% return rate across all areas of the Borough was achieved
  - a total of 81,000 forms were processed by the team of which 43,550 had changed details, compared to last year when 78,309 were processed of which 27,882 had changed details.
  - the number of forms collected on the doorstep by canvassers this was 25,912 which is an increase of 6,400 forms
  - the number of European registrations increased to 4,796 from 3,157
  - 3,922 electors who have not responded to the canvass for 2 years were removed
  - a total of 32,588 electors confirmed their registration electronically, this is 28.5% of the total returned

### **Electoral Register published on 17 February 2014**

14. The electorate is 221,990 and a breakdown by ward is shown at **Appendix A**. This total is 3,855 less than last year and this may be partly due to the additional work undertaken to increase accuracy.
15. The number of absent vote registrations is 55,085. This total is expected to rise as postal vote application forms and a reply paid envelope are being sent out to 19,586 electors who requested a form on their canvass form.

16. To comply with regulations, notice of removal letters are being sent to the 3,922 electors who have not responded to the canvass for the last 2 years. The notice includes a registration form and a reply paid envelope. However, it is possible these electors are no longer resident at that address.
17. European electors are entitled to vote at the local elections this May and further registration forms are being sent to the 4,796 registered to give them the opportunity to vote in the European elections in the UK

### **European Parliamentary and Local Government Elections**

18. The Electoral Commission selected Doncaster as one of the authorities to provide additional information to evidence for the Returning Officer Performance Standards and the first return has been submitted and has been confirmed to be meeting the standard. Further returns will be submitted throughout the election period.
19. A draft timetable has been sent to all elected members. There have been further changes to the timetable affected by the combination rules and a further update will be sent shortly. The final timetable will be included in the nomination pack that may be collected at the Candidate and Agents briefing meeting on Friday 11 April at 2pm in the Council Chamber.
20. New regulations have been introduced including changes governing absent voting at UK Parliamentary elections and local elections to implement provisions flowing from the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
21. The changes in the Regulations will apply for UK Parliamentary and local elections held on or after 22nd May 2014. The key changes are:
  - Provide for postal votes to be issued as soon as practicable at an election and to remove the current restriction on the issue of postal ballot papers before "day 11". These changes will allow postal votes to be dispatched further in advance of polling day.
  - As a consequence of the earlier dispatch of postal votes, to enable electors to cancel or vary their absent voting arrangements, after postal votes have issued, provided they do this before the postal vote application deadline (i.e. at least 11 working days before the poll) and that the postal ballot papers have not been completed and returned to the Returning Officer.
  - Extend the "emergency" proxy provisions to electors absent on the grounds of business or military service.
  - Provide for postal voters to be informed, within 3 months of the poll, where their postal vote has been rejected because the signature or date of birth that they have supplied on the postal voting statement failed to match that held on record - or where they had simply been left blank.
  - Put into legislation that 100% of postal vote statements are to be checked

## **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

22. All of the above are statutory duties and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

23. Requirements set out in the following legislation:

- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- Political Parties and Elections Act (2009) – Provision of identifying information and data to EROs
- Representation of the Peoples Act 1983 – EAA 2006 statutory duty to maintain an accurate and complete electoral register
- European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002
- European Parliamentary Elections Regulations 2004 including most recent amendments

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

24. Cabinet Office are continuing to supply funding for the transition to IER

25. The costs and shared costs arising from the European Parliamentary election will be claimed from Government.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

26. Sufficient resources will need to be made available to implement individual registration and deliver the combined European Parliamentary and Local Government Elections in order to ensure that the Council complies with its legal duties.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

27. Whilst the system for IER will be as convenient and efficient as possible for all users, the impacts on the following groups of people were particularly considered as part of the equality impact assessment:

- those currently under-represented on the register
- those who present a particular challenge in 2014
- those who have special requirements

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report to the Elections and Democratic Structures Committee – 26th November 2013.

**JO MILLER**  
**(LOCAL) RETURNING OFFICER**

## Electoral Register published on 17 February 2014

<b>WARD</b>	Total electors
Adwick	10883
Armthorpe	10946
Askern Spa	9725
Balby	11154
Bentley	10103
Bessacarr & Cantley	11285
Central	10821
Conisbrough & Denaby	10386
Edenthorpe, Kirk Sandall & Barnby Dun	10776
Edlington & Warmsworth	10271
Finningley	12257
Great North Road	11788
Hatfield	10028
Mexborough	11446
Rossington	9904
Sprotbrough	9584
Stainforth & Moorends	9596
Thorne	10762
Torne Valley	9942
Town Moor	10271
Wheatley	10042
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>221990</b>