



City of Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 28 February 2024

To: The Chair and Members of the

ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE

Report Title: Canvass Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides members with an update on the final outcome of the Annual Canvass and a detailed breakdown of the statistics for each Route and final electorate by ward.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

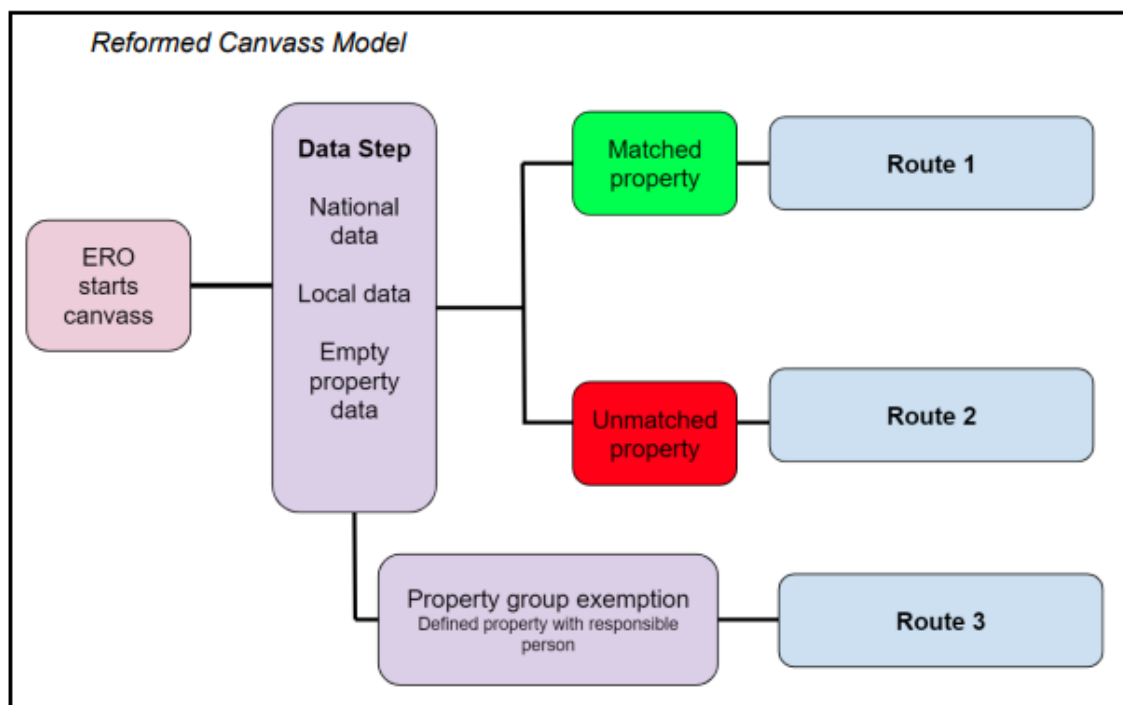
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

4. Ensuring the Electoral Register is as up to date as possible and carrying out proactive electoral activity is key to public engagement to ensure residents are registered to enable them to vote when an election occurs.

BACKGROUND

5. Each year the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) has a duty to carry out a full annual review of the Electoral Register by contacting all residential addresses to establish if the information currently held on the Electoral Register is complete and accurate, this is called the Annual Canvass. The purpose of the canvass is to identify everyone who should be on the electoral register. This means identifying citizens who should be registered but are currently not, as well as identifying electors who are no longer at a property and should therefore be removed from the register. A revised version of the electoral register must be published by December 1st each year, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

6. With the introduction of the canvass reforms in 2020, only properties where all the electors cannot be matched against national and/or local data are required to respond. The overall aim of canvass reform is to deliver a more efficient system by which Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) can maintain their electoral registers with no negative effect on citizens, or on the accuracy and completeness of the registers.
7. The canvass incorporates a 'data step' at the outset of the process. This informs the ERO, based on the data available, which properties are likely to have an unchanged household composition, based on matching data on the electoral register against national Government data and, where relevant, locally held data sources. Local datasets are available to the ERO under their existing powers, provided by Regulations 23, 35 and 35A of the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001.



8. The ERO will follow one of three routes for each property:

Route 1 - the matched properties route, this will be used for properties where the data indicates no change in household composition.

Route 2 - the unmatched properties route, this will be used for properties where data matching has highlighted that there may be a change to the information the ERO currently holds for the property.

Route 3 - These properties are defined as Care Homes and Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants.

Route 1

9. The National data matching process had to take place between 1 June to 31 August 2023 and Electoral Services carried out the National data match download on 26 June 2023. At that time there was 225,282 registered electors and 146,455 properties in Doncaster and 85.67% of electors and 111,010 (75.79%) properties successfully matched from the initial national data matching download for Route 1.
10. Electoral Services carried out data mining in order to match a further 11,828 electors from Council Tax records and a further 400 properties for Route 1. A further 1,857 properties were matched from other internal local data sources.

Route 2

- These properties were the un-matched properties that did require a response. Under Route 2 - Stage 1, we sent letters and e-mails to 33,357 properties and 7,032 (21.08%) properties responded. A further 26,325 reminder letters were sent out for Route 2 - Stage 2, w/c 9th October and we received a further 4,404 (16.73%) responses. Leaving the remaining 21,921 outstanding properties for Route 2 - stage 3 requiring a personal visit. Foot canvassers visited those outstanding properties to try to obtain a response and Electoral Services continued to data mine to match properties using all available internal data. A further 7,334 (33.46%) responses were obtained for Route 3, stage 3. Overall for all three stages, the return rate was 18,770 (56.27%) for Route 2.

Route 3

11. These properties are defined as Care Homes, all of which are required to provide an update on their current occupants. The Electoral Services Team contacted all Care Homes directly due to the high turn around in these types of properties to establish that everything could be as up to date as possible. We were able to obtain a response from all care homes achieving a 100% response rate for route 3

Breakdown

12. The overall response rate for all three Routes including those who did not need to respond was 90.19% although we received more responses back than last year the overall % is slightly down on last year's return of 90.27%. A breakdown per year can be found below:

Year	Responses received at the end of Canvass	% of Responded properties at end of Canvass	Number of properties outstanding
2024	132,085	90.19%	14,370
2022	128,652	90.27%	13,802
2021	129,483	91.85%	11,483
2020*	132,801	94.67%	7,479
2019*	117,000	84.20%	21,948
2018	119,859	86.42%	18,836
2017	118,017	85.70%	19,698

2016	112,364	82.87%	23,230
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*2019 Canvass was ended early due to snap Parliamentary election on 12 December 2019

*2020 Canvass no foot canvass carried out due to Covid

13. Despite a later than normal start to the Annual Canvas due to the Tender award of a new Electoral Printer the 2023 annual canvass was completed in time and the revised Electoral Register was published on 1st December 2023 ensuring the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) met their statutory duty. The new Electorate as of 1st December 2023 was 219,250 electors and 56,228 Postal Voters.

14. Although the annual canvass has concluded, we continue to send Invitation to Register (ITR) forms and e-mails to individuals where we only have a name and address but no personal information (DOB & NINO) which were identified during the annual canvass. Since we completed the annual canvass we have sent 14,511 ITR's and received 8,595 on-line registrations, 1,137 by paper form and 84 via telephone. These include a mixture of new registrations and also those that have moved property and are required to re-register at their new address.

15. Since the register was published the electorate has increased and currently stands at 223,120 electors and 55,967 Postal Voters. A detailed breakdown of the current electorate by ward including postal vote breakdown is provided at **Appendix A** of this report.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED


16. Electoral Registration is a statutory function and must be carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.







REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

17. This report is primarily for information only.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

18.

Great 8 Priority	Positive Overall	Mix of Positive & Negative	Trade-offs to consider – Negative overall	Neutral or No implications
 Tackling Climate Change				✓

Comments:				
 Developing the skills to thrive in life and in work				✓
Comments:				
 Making Doncaster the best place to do business and create good jobs				✓
Comments:				
 Building opportunities for healthier, happier and longer lives for all				✓
Comments:				
 Creating safer, stronger, greener and cleaner communities where everyone belongs				✓
Comments:				
 Nurturing a child and family-friendly borough				✓
Comments:				
 Building Transport and digital connections fit for the future				✓
Comments:				
 Promoting the borough and its cultural, sporting, and heritage opportunities				✓
Comments:				

Fair & Inclusive	✓			
<p>The Council has a duty to ensure all eligible electors can register to vote and respond to canvass forms easily and are provided with several ways in order to do so. Registration information is also available in alternative languages, Braille and by video (YouTube) link on the Council Web page.</p>				

Legal Implications [Officer Initials: SRF | Date: 16/02/2024]

19. There are comprehensive statutory provisions covering the delivery of electoral registration activity:
- Representation of the People Act
 - The Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations
 - The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass Amendment) Regulations
 - Local Government Act
 - Electoral Registration and Administration Act

Financial Implications [Officer Initials: PH | Date: 20/02/2024]

20. This work is funded solely from the Registration of Electors budget (NC003). Central Government no longer provide Councils with funding towards the annual canvass due to the reduction in the cost of delivering the Canvass under the Canvass Reforms.

Human Resources Implications

21. There are no Human Resources Implications arising from this report.

Technology Implications

22. Technology implications have not been requested.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

23. Every effort is made to drive Individual Electoral Registration to ensure the Council and the ERO meets the Electoral Commission’s Performance Standards and complies with their legal duties.

CONSULTATION

24. Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

25. Previous EDSC reports.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

26.

ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
HMO	Homes of Multiple Occupancy
ITR	Invitation to Register
NINO	National Insurance Number
DOB	Date of Birth

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Trina Barber, Electoral Services Manager
Legal & Democratic Services

Tel: 01302 734398

E-mail: trina.barber@doncaster.gov.uk

Damian Allen

Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer