



Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

17 April 2014

Report title	Update on the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paul Sweet Governance and Performance	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Simon Warren, Chief Executive	
Originating service	Democratic Services	
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Report to be/has been considered by	n/a	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to review and comment on the ongoing implementation of Individual Electoral Registration.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report gives an update on the progress with the move to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in 2014. It provides details of the current proposals for registration processes for local authorities and proposals for funding the transition stage.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2013 received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013.
- 2.2 An expert panel was appointed by the Cabinet Office approximately two years ago to help shape the process for IER and ensure practical issues were not overlooked. The panel consists of a number of experienced electoral administrators and electoral registration officers.

3.0 IER transition and process

- 3.1 Under IER electors will be required to register individually rather than by household. During the transition period in summer 2014, the Electoral Services team will try to match all existing electors with information held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on its customer database. If the information is matched, the entry on the register will be confirmed and the elector will be told that they need take no further action. Based on information from the 'dry run' in July 2013, it is anticipated that around 139,000 electors (approximately 77%) will be confirmed in this way.
- 3.2 The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will also be required to invite people who have not been confirmed by the above process, as well as any other person the ERO may think is eligible to register individually, by sending them an invitation to register form. This will be approximately 28,000 electors. Where the ERO does not hold any information on a particular property, or there is some doubt about who lives at an address, a household enquiry form (HEF) will be sent to obtain the relevant details. Once this information is received, individual invitations will then be despatched. The HEFs will number approximately 24,000, although work is currently being undertaken with unresponsive properties to try to ascertain who is living there in an attempt to reduce this number. The figures are based on the dry run in 2013 but these should improve due to the (local and European) election prior to the beginning of the transition period and availability of a more up-to-date register following the canvass in late 2013/early 2014.
- 3.3 Electors will be able to register online or by submitting a form to the ERO. Sample examples of the invitation to register and the HEF are attached as appendices A and B.
- 3.4 The ERO, working through a project board and team, has begun to develop a single integrated public engagement strategy for the local authority, drawing on guidance and material from the Electoral Commission. This will particularly look at:

- Identifying new electors.
- Identifying target audiences using local public engagement activity.
- Developing public awareness and registration contact methods.
- Ensuring necessary connectivity's and packages are in place as per Cabinet Office requirements.

An example of the Electoral Commission's publicity material is attached at appendix C. The Commission has developed an overarching strategy, which can be tailored to particular local priorities (e.g. students, the elderly, particular ethnic minority groups, etc.).

- 3.5 The Electoral Commission has developed performance standards to support EROs by identifying the behaviours necessary for the effective preparation for and implementation of IER.

4.0 Implementation timetable

- 4.1 The key dates for the rest of the programme are as follows:

22 May 2014:	Local and European elections
10 June 2014:	IER goes live – new applicants registered under the new system.
Summer 2014:	Promotional activity – local and national. Confirmation of data with DWP database.
Autumn 2014:	Postal vote identifier refresh (all registrations over five years old). Household enquiry forms (HEFs) sent out.
Winter 2014:	Assessment of non-responders (to establish whether they should be retained on the electoral register – 'carried forward').
1 December 2014:	Re-publication of register.
April 2015:	Registration deadline for 2015 elections.
7 May 2015:	Local and Parliamentary elections.
Summer 2015:	HEFs sent out. Government to confirm final sign-off of IER (transition could be extended 12 months).
Autumn 2015:	Electoral canvass.
November 2015:	Publicity about new arrangements. Deletion of 'carry forwards' where no response received/data not matched.
December 2015:	New IER register published.

- 4.2 The implementation and transition is being managed as a project under the Council's corporate project management methodology. The project status is currently showing as 'green'.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The transition from the current household registration system for electors to IER is the most significant change to the UK system of electoral registration for many years. The

Government has announced that it is committed to funding the full cost of the transition to IER, over and above the current cost of electoral registration, and has allocated a budget nationally of £108.3 million for this purpose. It has also committed to funding any further additional costs post-transition.

- 5.2 The cost of work already undertaken in 2013/14 has been covered by an initial grant payment of just over £10,000. A further payment of £21,000 was received in March 2014 specifically to encourage registration. Some of this will be used to identify and encourage registration in properties which currently show no electors. The balance of this additional funding unused in 2013/14 will be carried forward into 2014/15 to complete the participation programme, including targeting students and young people and other under-registered groups. Another grant payment of just under £102,000 will be made to the Council in April 2014 to support the continuing transition to IER.

[GE/03042014/Z]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council must comply with the requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and has a statutory obligation to implement the new electoral registration arrangements.

[RB/01042014/D]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 The Cabinet Office issued an impact assessment of IER from a national perspective which contained an equalities analysis. The document has now been reviewed by the Equalities team in order to carry out an analysis locally for Wolverhampton. The report identified four unique characteristics that require addressing under the project, these are:

- Age (older and younger people)
- Disability
- Race

- 7.2 Work is currently being carried out by the IER Project Support and the Equalities team to ensure an analysis is put in place and support is demonstrated for the above characteristics via the communications plan and other areas of work.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 The introduction of IER will have a small environmental impact, in that it should reduce the amount of paper used due to online registration.

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 No significant HR implications are anticipated but there is little information yet available about the impact of changed working methods for electoral registration, so this will be kept under review.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

10.1 There are no implications for the Council's property portfolio arising from this report.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel: Introduction of IER – 20 June 2013.
Cabinet: Introduction of IER – 22 May 2013.