

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Governance and Ethics Committee

1 September 2022

Report title	Update on the 2022 annual canvass	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities	
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Report to be considered by	Election Board	22 September 2022

Recommendations for noting:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is asked to note:

1. The progress of the 2022 annual canvass

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on the annual canvass.

2.0 Background

2.1 It is a legal requirement for the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to carry out an annual canvass to ensure that the electoral register is up to date.

2.2 This is the third year of the reformed annual canvass. The 2020 annual canvass was the first to be held under the reformed canvass as per The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. The annual canvass now starts with a national data match of the electoral register with DWP records to categorise properties into route one – matched properties (indicating no change in household composition), or route two - no match (indicating a change in household composition). This allows the ERO to take a flexible approach and target resources on properties where there is a change.

2.3 Route one properties receive a 'light touch' canvass, where they are sent a letter but only need to respond if there is a change. The route two properties must respond and are sent multiple different types of communications including a door knock to elicit a response. There is also a route three for properties with a senior responsible officer who can respond on behalf of the residents. In Wolverhampton, Care Homes with a senior responsible officer are assigned to route three.

2.4 The earliest the annual canvass can start by 1 July and conclude by 1 December for the publication of the revised register. Wolverhampton started contacting electors as part of the annual canvass on 12 July.

2.5 The timetable is set out below:

Communication	Date	Detail
Route 1 CCA Email	12 July	To matched households where an email address is held. They must respond to this.
Route 1 CCA Letter	8 August	To matched households where an email address is not held or where a response was not received to the email. They only need to respond if there is a change. Printed on green paper.
Route 2 CCB Letter	25 July	To not matched households. Response required. No pre-paid

		envelope – encourage response online. Printed on yellow paper.
Route 2 Canvass form	5 September	To not matched households who have not responded to CCB form. Response required. Pre-paid envelope provided
Route 2 CCB Telephone canvassing	12 - 23 September	To not matched households where a telephone number is held.
Route 2 Door Knock	27 September- 11 November	20 canvassers will be employed to carry this out.
Route 3 Contacting responsible officers	1 September	For Care Homes with lead officers to confirm resident's details

3.0 Data match

- 3.1 Before commencing the annual canvass, Electoral Services ran a data matching exercise with national Department for Work and Pensions records, and local council tax and customer service records. The match rate returned for this year was 81% (93,805 properties) up from last year's return of 79%, indicating no change in household composition.
- 3.2 Our data match continues to be above the national average reported by the Electoral Commission which recorded a national match rate of 75% in 2021 and 74% in 2020. On a local level our match rate is currently above the 2021 average of 77.5 % recorded for the West Midlands, evidencing high level of accuracy and completeness in the electoral register

4.0 Route one update

- 4.1 Properties in route one only need to respond if there is a change, except for those who received an initial email as they are required to respond to ensure that the communication had reached the property.
- 4.2 Emails were sent to 42,828 properties this year, and there has been a 44.7% response rate (19,157), which was an increase on the 27% response rate at this stage in 2021.
- 4.3 In 2021 there were some queries from residents checking whether the email was legitimate as they had not been contacted in this way before. There were minimal queries this year and more communications were put out in residents' newsletters and on the website to inform residents that they may receive this email.

- 4.4 74, 871 households without email addresses and those who did not respond to the email were sent a Canvass Communication Form A which is a two-sided A4 letter without a pre-paid envelope showing the names of people registered at this address and to invite them to respond online only if there were changes required. The table below shows the current outcome of the route one contacts. However, the aim with route 1 properties is not receive 100% response as a response is only required if there is a change.

	2022
Properties	93,626
Full responses	19,714 (21.06%)
Changes (electors added/deleted)	4782 (1074)
No changes	16,010

5.0 Route two update

- 5.1 All households in this route are required to respond and the ERO is required to contact these households three times and one of these must be a personal canvass such as a telephone call or door knock.
- 5.2 All 22, 435 properties received a Canvass Communication Form B letter which is an A4 double sided letter without a pre-paid envelope and electors were encouraged to respond online. Properties who do not respond at this stage will be sent an A3 double sided Canvass Form with a pre-paid envelope. Properties who do not respond to the canvass form will receive either a telephone call or 2 door knocks and a leaflet posted through the door. The table below shows the current outcome of the route two contacts:

	2022	
	Properties contacted	Response rate
CCB letter	22, 435	28.58% (6,412)

6.0 Route three update

- 6.1 Route 3 properties are care homes where there is a senior responsible officer who can respond on behalf of all of the residents. In September, Electoral Services will take a more targeted approach to generating responses from Route 3 properties including emailing and calling senior responsible officers up to three times.

7.0 Overall completion rate

- 7.1 As of 24 August, the overall completion rate for the annual canvass is **86.2%**.

8.0 Financial implications

8.1 The annual canvass process is funded from the current electoral registration net expenditure budget of £362,000. [GE/09082022/C]

9.0 Legal implications

9.1 All of the preparations outlined in this report meet the statutory provisions for the annual canvass. [SZ/12082022/P]

10.0 Equalities implications

10.1 The nature of the reformed Annual Canvass enables Electoral Registration Officers to focus resources on the wards where the data indicates that there has been a change in household composition.

11.0 All other implications

11.1 There are no other implications arising from this report at the current time.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

12.1 Evaluation of May 2022 Elections, Governance and Ethics Committee, 7 July 2022.