



# **Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel**

3 December 2014

<b>Report title</b>	Individual Electoral Registration	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Paul Sweet Governance and Performance	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Keith Ireland, Managing Director	
<b>Originating service</b>	Democratic Services	
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	n/a	

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## **Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

The Panel is recommended to review the closure report for the Individual Electoral Registration project.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The Panel has been monitoring the implementation of the new electoral registration arrangements, known as Individual Electoral Registration (IER). This report outlines progress over the past six months and enables the Panel to review the project closure report.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Electoral Registration and Administration Bill 2013 received Royal Assent on 31 January 2013. 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.
- 2.2 The project has been co-ordinated by the Electoral Services team with support from the Corporate Programme Office, and involvement from other corporate services (e.g. ICT, Communications, Customer Services, etc.) as required.

## **3.0 Implementation arrangements**

- 3.1 Work up until 'go live' in June 2014 focused on ensuring the necessary systems were in place to facilitate the new IER arrangements. This was a significant national piece of work, co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office through a number of regional structures and working with the electoral management system (EMS) suppliers. The Council's own EMS proved to be very effective, offering the necessary functionality to process individual registrations and link to other systems, primarily the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) database. This was not the experience across the country, or even within the region (e.g. both Birmingham and Walsall have had major difficulties, and had to engage significant additional support from the EMS supplier over the summer).
- 3.2 The go live process in June/July also went smoothly. Detailed statistics are contained in the project closure report, which is attached as appendix A, but the headline 'match rate' (the number of people on the existing register confirmed with DWP and local records) was over 90%.
- 3.3 Follow-up to the initial phases was delayed by the unexpected Police and Crime Commissioner by-election in August, which caused the canvassing stage to be put back several weeks. However, there was enough flexibility in the timetable to allow this and ensure the new IER electoral register will be published on 1 December. Final data, based on the new register, will be tabled at the Panel meeting.

## **4.0 Follow-up to the implementation project**

- 4.1 The Electoral Services team will continue to handle registrations over the coming months, working to maximise the accuracy of the register prior to the General Election in

May 2015. This will include a confirmation exercise in January/February to encourage new registrations and amendments to existing details.

- 4.2 Following the General Election there will be a full canvass to create a register from scratch. This will include deleting from the register anybody who has not successfully registered under IER (i.e. provided their date of birth/National Insurance number, and been confirmed by DWP).

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 The government has committed to meeting IER implementation costs in full and has provided the Council with funding totalling £132,000 over 2013/14 and 2014/15.. This resource has been utilised in a variety of ways, facilitating additional mailouts and canvassing, encouraging representation amongst under-represented groups, such as students, and tackling increased enquiry volumes because of the new arrangements. It has also supported infrastructure development arising from IER, including software enhancements and new equipment purchases.
- 5.2 Although final outturn figures are not yet available, the indications are that the funding will not be fully utilised in 2014/15. Any surplus funding will be carried forward into 2015/16 to support further individual electoral registration activities.

[GE/14112014/H]

## **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/17112014/S]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

- 7.1 The Cabinet Office issued an impact assessment of IER from a national perspective which contained an equalities analysis. An initial analysis was also undertaken at a local level, which helped shape some of the project work (e.g. in the communications strand). There was not a requirement for a full analysis to be undertaken.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

- 9.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

Confident, Capable Council: Update on the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration, 17 April 2014

# INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (IER) END OF PROJECT REPORT

## Documents Controls

### Version Control

Version	Version Date	Author	Reason for Change
V0.1	12.11.2014	L.Gittos	Initial draft
V0.2	13.11.2014	L.Gittos	Further detail added
V0.3	13.11.2014	Martyn Sargeant	Financial information added

### Quality Reviews

Version	Review Date	Reviewed by	Role	Reviewers Comments

### Approvals

Version	Name	Role	Date of Issue
V1.0	Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services	13 Nov 2014

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## 1 Overall Project Performance

Legally the Council was obligated to deliver the IER project as part of the national scheme; the government saw this project as an opportunity to address electoral registration and election fraud.

**Data Matching:** initially, out of a voting age population of 179,090, just over 150,000 residents were matched against the Department for Work and Pensions' database, which equates to nearly 84%. This was a slight improvement on the dry-run exercise previously undertaken. The postal voter match rate was even higher at about 89% (16,240 out of a potential 18,225). After local data matching (e.g. using Council Tax records), the match rate improved to 90% (161,205 voters). The ward breakdown (appendix 1) shows a more detailed breakdown of where matching was not possible initially (red and amber status).

The areas with the highest red statuses were:

- St Peter's
- Blakenhall
- Heath Town
- Graiseley
- Park

**Follow-up Phases:** following the initial data matching stages, work took place over the autumn to target those properties for which no information was held and those individuals already on the register for whom a match had not been achieved. This was done through a targeted canvass exercise, commencing with mailings to the relevant addresses of either a household enquiry form (HEF), which sought to establish who was resident at a property, or an invitation to register (ITR), which captured the details of particular individuals, including the additional data now required (date of birth and National Insurance number). This is effectively an ongoing process and will culminate in the short term in the republication of the electoral register. There will be a further push in early 2015 (prior to the General Election) and then a full canvass exercise in summer 2015.

**Project Governance:** Overall the project performed well and to the set standard to manage projects in Wolverhampton City Council. Key project milestones and risks were supplied by the Cabinet Office, the documents were reviewed and a full project plan was created to support project execution. A risk and issue register was also put in place and reviewed as part of the IER catch-up meetings between the Project Manager and Project Co-Ordinator. The project produced monthly highlight reports to joint SEB/CDB, following the Corporate Programme Office standards.

**Scanners:** New A3 scanners were required to support the new registration form template issues by the Cabinet Office. Additional budget was supplied by the Cabinet Office to purchase the equipment; work was done with ICT to ensure they were installed by the correct date for go-live.

**Printing and Mail Out:** After a tender review it was agreed at the Project Board to appoint an external company (FCS) to supply and print materials. Overall the printing was done to the desired standard, although there was one issue with one of templates but this was dealt with

and corrected. There were large volumes to be printed and from this numerous lessons have been learnt, going forward processes will be changed to ensure thorough checking of all new templates.

**Communication:** The project engaged early with the Council's Communications Team to ensure a positive approach was taken and a plan put in place. Materials for communication were supplied by the Cabinet Office; logos and banners were used as appropriate for signage, etc. Communication about IER was minimal with the public initially as the national launch was not planned until June 2014. Therefore the Council's communication was centred on registering to vote: 'It's your vote - don't lose it'. Various forms of communication, from leaflets and social media, were employed to get the message out. In the first week of the Facebook page being launched, 447 Wolverhampton residents followed the link to the Electoral Commission site.

Pop up stands were established at the University of Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Colleges' Freshers Fairs in autumn 2014, and also in spring 2014 at the College campuses. At the latter events, paper forms were given out and students encouraged to register before the transfer to IER. At the Freshers Fairs, students were given cards and leaflets outlining what IER is, how it can affect them and how to register. The Registrar at the University of Wolverhampton sent an email to all staff in the summer of 2014 outlining the changes to voter registration, advising how to support students throughout it and encouraging them to register if necessary. A link to the 'register to vote' webpage was also added to the University's enrolment page. Every student must re-enrol each academic year, so the traffic through this site would be very high. There is on-going work to secure a data sharing agreement with the University, which would enable a mass mail out to students. There is also on-going work with the Students Union at the University of Wolverhampton to engage students to help canvass residents to register to vote. Both the College and the University have expressed an interest in continued engagement with the Electoral Registration team, particularly in events running up to the General Election, to boost student registration.

**Customer Services:** The Customer Services team's involvement in IER revolved around the dissemination of legislative changes and providing customers with correct advice and first time resolution on every contact. The Business Relationship Manager and Complaints Manager ensured that knowledge and systems training was scheduled in at early intervals allowing time for queries to be addressed in the internal domain before the public accessed front of house and telephony services. Web content 'wire-frames' were created to ensure the customer journey was considered from every entry point available. Front of house queries were brought to the main reception counter with staff receiving increased training around document verification and assistance. Performance feedback is monitored on an on-going basis with existing business rules to be reviewed to ensure the IER changes have fully embedded into business as usual.

**Information Governance:** A privacy impact assessment (PIA) was completed for the project. Information governance and the protection of data is also part of the cascade of training for staff and canvassers.

**Equalities:** There was early engagement with the Council's Equalities team. Although a national document was provided by the Cabinet Office, there was a requirement to carry out a local screening, which helped focus work particular strands of work.

**Financials:** for 2014/15, the Cabinet Office provided initial funding of £96,000 to cover the additional costs of IER implementation. This was subsequently supplemented by a further £5,000 to cover the cost of procuring A3 scanners (see above). Although final budget information is not yet available (due to ongoing costs in the final stage of the canvass exercise), the project is well under budget for the year to date. The majority of the budget has been expended on additional printing/mailing costs and extra office staff during the implementation phase.

**Changes:** During the delivery period of the project there was re-scheduling due to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) bi-election that was held in August 2014. This changed the schedule slightly, and the project plan was adjusted accordingly. Overall this has not affected the end date of the project and the register will be published on 1 December as planned.

**Issues:** An incorrect letter was mailed out to 39,085 residents in Wolverhampton; they are not on the open register as the letter advised. Given the scale of the issue, an advertisement was placed in the Chronicle and Express and Star advising of the mistake, apologising for the error and confirming that people who have been asked for their details to be removed from the open register are, in fact, on the edited version.

## 2 Project Status and Reason for Closure

The project has now moved into closure, with the main deliverables for the project now achieved. The project will soon release the final copy of the register and statistics will be shared with the Cabinet Office. A report will be submitted to the 3C Scrutiny Panel and approval for formal closure will be sought at the IER Project Board on 10 December 2014. The project will then move into business as usual for the elections team.

## 3 Review of Team Performance

The project structure established a disciplined and co-ordinated approach to delivering its key objectives set out by central government for the project. The project established a project team in January 2014 comprising key officers and stakeholders who would support the delivery of the project, linking into Procurement, ICT, Communications and Customer Services. All project members deserve credit for their approach to delivering the work required; the elections team played a pivotal role in this.

The IER Board met as and when required and provided the requisite steer and undertook the required decision-making function.

## 4 Follow On Actions and Recommendations

The main follow ups after closure are:

- De-duplication – removing duplicate entries from the register
- Confirmation exercise in late January/early February 2015

## Wolverhampton: IER implementation data

	DWP-Red		DWP-Amber		DWP-Green		LDM-Green		Confirmed		Not confirmed	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
All Electors	25,666	14.33	3,326	1.86	150,098	83.81	11,107	100.00	161,205	90.01	17,885	9.99
Attainers	268	0.15	10	0.01	552	0.31	4	0.04	556	0.31	274	0.15
Postal Voters	1,715	0.96	273	0.15	16,248	9.07	1,022	9.20	17,270	9.64	966	0.54
Proxy Voters	2	0.00	1	0.00	21	0.01	0	0.00	21	0.01	3	0.00
Carry-forward electors	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

	DWP-Red	%	DWP-Amber	%	DWP-Green	%	LDM-Green	%	Confirmed	%	Not confirmed	%	Confirmation letters	HEF letters	ITR letters
All Wards	25,666	14.33	3,326	1.86	150,098	83.81	11,107	100.00	161,205	90.01	17,885	9.99	161,205	17,249	17,885
Bilston East	1,172	0.65	146	0.08	8,054	4.50	577	5.19	8,631	4.82	741	0.04	8,631	1,354	741
Bilston North	909	0.51	123	0.07	7,797	4.35	429	3.86	8,226	4.59	603	0.03	8,226	590	603
Blakenhall	1,467	0.82	253	0.14	6,870	3.84	516	4.65	7,386	4.12	1,204	0.10	7,386	774	1,204
Bushbury North	987	0.55	105	0.06	8,007	4.47	526	4.74	8,533	4.76	566	0.03	8,533	529	566
Bushbury South and Low Hill	1,312	0.73	191	0.11	8,171	4.56	544	4.90	8,715	4.87	959	0.05	8,715	1,073	959
East Park	1,004	0.56	176	0.10	7,707	4.30	484	4.36	8,191	4.57	696	0.04	8,191	785	696
Ettingshall	1,413	0.79	189	0.11	7,616	4.25	600	5.40	8,216	4.59	1,002	0.06	8,216	1,292	1,002
Fallings Park	936	0.52	95	0.05	7,999	4.47	443	3.99	8,442	4.71	588	0.03	8,442	479	588
Graiseley	1,528	0.85	236	0.13	6,687	3.73	649	5.84	7,336	4.10	1,115	0.07	7,336	1,039	1,115
Heath Town	1,877	1.05	242	0.14	6,758	3.77	653	5.88	7,411	4.14	1,466	0.07	7,411	1,377	1,466
Merry Hill	1,005	0.56	102	0.06	8,203	4.58	527	4.74	8,730	4.87	580	0.03	8,730	515	580
Oxley	1,101	0.61	116	0.06	7,801	4.36	545	4.91	8,346	4.66	672	0.03	8,346	614	672
Park	1,647	0.92	337	0.19	6,080	3.39	749	6.74	6,829	3.81	1,235	0.10	6,829	1,497	1,235
Penn	1,323	0.74	142	0.08	8,561	4.78	686	6.18	9,247	5.16	779	0.04	9,247	481	779
Spring Vale	1,019	0.57	118	0.07	7,680	4.29	492	4.43	8,172	4.56	645	0.04	8,172	609	645
St Peters	2,624	1.47	284	0.16	5,316	2.97	531	4.78	5,847	3.26	2,377	0.10	5,847	2,062	2,377
Tettenhall Regis	1,218	0.68	162	0.09	7,921	4.42	584	5.26	8,505	4.75	796	0.06	8,505	582	796
Tettenhall Wightwick	1,232	0.69	129	0.07	7,711	4.31	637	5.74	8,348	4.66	724	0.03	8,348	594	724
Wednesfield North	878	0.49	64	0.04	7,817	4.36	452	4.07	8,269	4.62	490	0.02	8,269	383	490
Wednesfield South	1,014	0.57	116	0.06	7,342	4.10	483	4.35	7,825	4.37	647	0.03	7,825	620	647

DWP Red: Checked with DWP and not confirmed.  
DWP Amber: Checked with DWP and requires local checking.  
DWP Green: Checked with DWP and confirmed.  
LDM Green: Red and Amber from above, checked and confirmed through local data.