

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Governance and Ethics Committee

7 September 2023

Report title	Update on the 2023 Annual Canvass	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Cabinet Member for Governance and Equalities	
Accountable director	David Pattison, Chief Operating Officer	
Originating service	Electoral Services	
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Report has been considered by	Election Board	19 June 2023

Recommendation for action or decision:

The Governance and Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the timetable for the 2023 annual canvass and to provide feedback on the approach.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To outline the approach and timescales for the 2023 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 fourth year of the reformed annual canvass. The annual canvass started with a national data match of the electoral register with Department for Work and Pension (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 canvass communication 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 3 July and conclude by 1 December for the publication of the revised register. Wolverhampton started contacting electors as part of the annual canvass on 4 July 2023.

2.5 The timetable is set out below:

Communication	Date	Detail
Route 1 Canvass Communication A (CCA) Email	4 July	To matched households where an email address is held. They must respond to this.
Route 1 CCA Letter	7 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 Canvass Communication B (CCB) Letter	10 July	To not matched households. Response required. No pre-paid envelope – encourage response online. Printed on yellow paper.

Route 2 Canvass form	15 August	To not matched households who have not responded to CCB form. Response required. Pre-paid envelope provided
Route 2 CCB Telephone canvassing	10 August-7 September	To not matched households where a telephone number is held.
Route 2 Door Knock	13 September-30 October (with potential to extend)	20 canvassers will be employed to carry this out.
Route 3 Contacting responsible officers	1 August-30 November	For Care Homes with lead officers to confirm resident's details

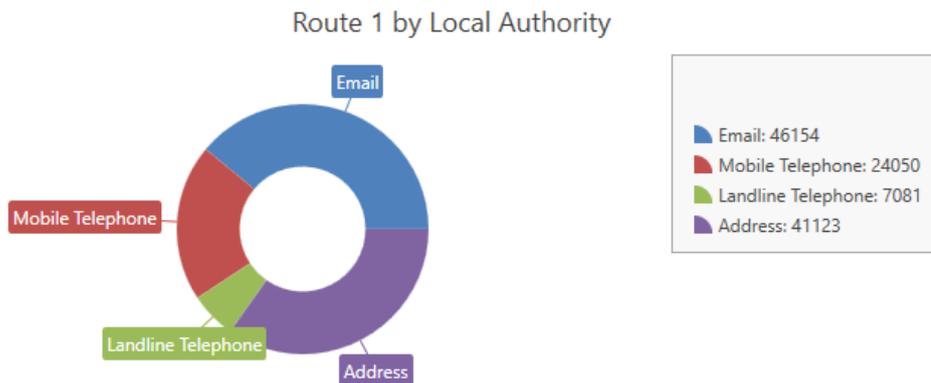
3.0 Data match

- 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% (94,321) of properties that indicated no change in household composition, which was the same match rate as the 2022 annual canvass.
- 3.2 Our data match continues to be above the national average reported by the Electoral Commission which recorded a national match rate of 74.4% in 2022 and 75% in 2021. On a local level our match rate is currently above the 2022 average of 74.2 % recorded for the West Midlands, evidencing a high level of accuracy and completeness in the electoral register.

4.0 Route One

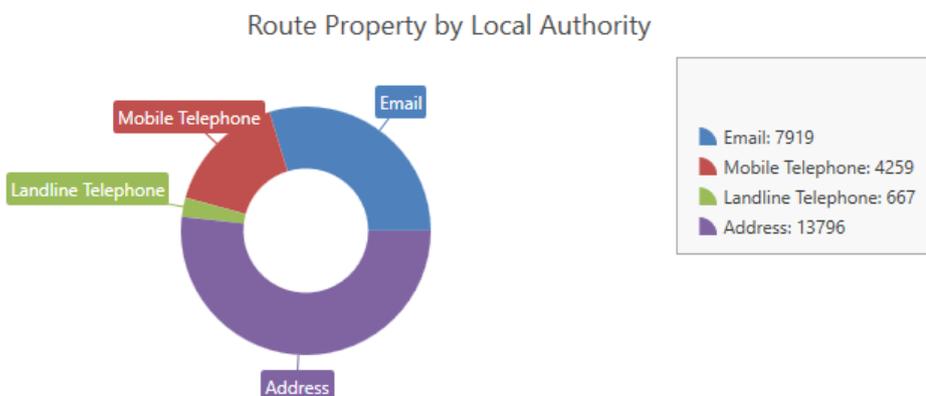
- 4.1 Properties in Route 1 only need to respond if there is a change, except for those who received an initial email as they are required to respond to ensure that the communication has reached the property.
- 4.2 Households without email addresses and those who do not respond to the email will be sent a Canvass Communication Form A (CCA) which is a two-sided A4 letter without a pre-paid envelope. The CCA form shows the names of people registered at the address and will invite them to respond online only if there are changes required. However, the aim with Route 1 properties is not receive 100% response as a response is only required if there is a change.
- 4.3 Emails will be sent to 46,201 properties this year compared to 42,838 in 2022 and 15,507 in 2021. This shows the steady increase in electors submitting their email addresses as part of the electoral registration process. The increase in electors that are contacted via this method reduces the printing costs and administration tasks for Electoral Services allowing for more time to target non-responders in other routes.

- 4.4 In 2022 there were some queries from residents checking whether the email was legitimate as they had not been contacted in this way before. To reduce queries this year communications will be put out in residents' newsletters and on the website to inform residents that they may receive this email.
- 4.5 The table below shows the breakdown of current contact details held for Route 1 electors.



5.0 Route Two

- 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 Where telephone numbers are held, telephone canvassing will be undertaken by customer services employees to deliver this service. There are currently 4,926 electors that can be targeted by telephone in Route 2 for this year's canvass.
- 5.3 The table below shows the breakdown of current contact details held for Route 2 electors.



- 5.4 Twenty canvassers will be employed to cover the door knock stage for each ward. They will attend each property for the minimum two required visits and will return to properties that require more targeted canvassing.

5.5 This year the door knock stage has been brought forward one month from last year, the feedback from canvassers was that they preferred working September – October due to the weather and daylight hours. Further extension of the door knock stage can be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

6.0 Route Three

6.1 Route 3 properties are care homes where there is a senior responsible officer who can respond on behalf of all the residents. From August, 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. Electoral Services have brought forward the dates for contacting Route 3 properties to allow more time for responsible officers to respond.

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 The annual canvass process is funded from the current electoral registration net expenditure budget of £378,380. [SR/19062023/A]

8.0 Legal implications

8.1 All of the preparations outlined in this report meet the statutory provisions for the annual canvass. [SZ/20062023/P]

9.0 Equalities implications

9.1 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.

10.0 All other Implications

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

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 Evaluation of Annual Canvass 2022, Governance and Ethics Committee, 12 January 2023