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**INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (IER)**

Committee: Annual Council

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[P8]

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1.0 **ISSUE**

- 1.1 To brief Members on the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the impact on electors and Members, and the potential issues arising from this change.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The current system of electoral registration sees an annual mailing of registration forms to each property in the district. A single member of each household is able to update the form by way of adding and deleting electors as appropriate.
- 3.2 From Summer 2014 this system of household registration will transition to a system based on registration by the individual.
- 3.3 The new system of registration will require electors to provide their national insurance number (NINO) and their date of birth. For the first time, electors will also be able to register online.
- 3.4 The move to IER will also introduce the need to verify applications against the database held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

4.0 **IER CANVASS PROCESS (2014 ONLY)**

- 4.1 From 10 June 2014, electors will be required to register individually rather than by household. In June 2014, the register of electors will be sent electronically by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to the DWP for data matching. This "confirmation" process has been designed to passport as many electors as possible directly from the current register to the new IER register. ECDC has been informed that its confirmation run date will be 26 June 2014.
- 4.2 The data will be returned to the ERO approximately 5 days later with a RAG (red/amber/green) status for each elector. Electors who are returned as green

have passed the data matching process and will not be required to register individually.

- 4.3 The ERO then will carry out a process of local data matching, whereby red and amber electors are matched against other council held records. If possible, they will be converted to a green match under this process.
- 4.4 All green electors will receive a letter to advise them of their confirmation.
- 4.5 Any electors still amber or red when local data matching is completed, will be sent an "Invitation to Register" (ITR) form. ITR forms will enable individuals to individually register on the new IER register. The ITR form will display a web address to encourage online registration.
- 4.6 Any properties recorded as void will be sent a "Household Enquiry Form" (HEF) form. HEF forms will look similar to the existing canvass form, and will invite a single member of the household to list the names of those people resident in the property that are entitled to be registered. Upon receipt of the HEF, the ERO will send ITR forms to those electors introduced on the HEF.
- 4.7 All forms (HEFs & ITRs) will need to be followed up with an initial reminder, and then with canvasser visit(s).
- 4.8 Non responders to the 2014 canvass will **not** be removed from the register when it is published on 1 December. This is because the government do not want to see a large fall in registration levels in advance of the Parliamentary General Election in 2015. Note: electors with absent votes in place must register individually in 2014 or their absent vote will be cancelled.

## 5.0 IER CANVASS PROCESS 2015

- 5.1 The canvass in 2015 will begin with HEFs being sent to every property in the district.
- 5.2 The information provided on the returned HEFs will be used to send out ITR forms to new electors. There will be no requirement to re-register individually on an annual basis, i.e. if an elector has previously been passported across having been matched at the DWP, or if an elector has previously returned an ITR form or registered online, they will not have to register again. They will have to register again if they have moved house or changed their name.
- 5.3 Returned HEFs will be processed by the ERO and newly identified electors will be sent an ITR form.
- 5.4 As with the 2014 canvass, all HEFs and ITRs will be followed up with a reminder and doorstep canvassing.
- 5.5 Upon completion of the 2015 canvass, all electors who have failed to register individually will be removed from the register.

## 6.0 POST 2015

- 6.1 After the 2015 canvass, the government consider that the transition to IER will be complete and registration will revert to “business as usual”, with IER operating as the norm.

## 7.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 A dry run of the DWP confirmation process took place in July 2013, and resulted in a match rate of just over 78% of the district’s electors being returned as green. Work on the transition to IER commenced in May 2013 and is being steered within this Council by a Project Board of stakeholder Officers.
- 7.2 The Electoral Commission will be tasked with increasing awareness at a national level, but locally the Electoral Services team have been working with the Communications and Media Officer and other EROs from across the county trying to engage with historically under-registered groups of people. In East Cambs, these have typically been migrant workers, stud workers, young people, older people in care homes, non-English speakers and Travellers.
- 7.3 Members should be aware that irrespective of how well the message is communicated, the transition to IER has the potential to be poorly received in some parts of the community. In particular, residents may not be happy to provide NINOs and dates of birth to canvassing staff.
- 7.4 There is a concern nationally, that levels of registration could be significantly negatively impacted upon introduction of IER. This is why electors will be safeguarded in 2014, and could see a 2014 register that is fairly inaccurate, as non-responding electors will not be deleted. This will change after the General Election when those who have not responded under IER will be deleted. It is impossible to forecast what level of impact this might have, but the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office have voiced concerns that it will hit traditionally under-registered groups the hardest

## 8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Government has committed to funding the transition to IER through the distribution of non-ring fenced grant funding. To date, this Council has received funding of £9,684 for the additional Hardware required to implement IER; £3,518 for maximising voter registration local initiatives; and £5,000 for a justification led grant bid to correct a small number of UPRN anomalies in order to improve voter confirmation rates. The Council also has received notification of a final funding allocation for IER transitional costs in 2014/15 of £42,857, which is slightly less than the bid submitted.
- 8.2 This funding should be sufficient to facilitate the transition to IER. However, the Government has made no funding commitments beyond the 2015 canvass. This means that the potential cost of administering “business as

usual” electoral registration is likely to be considerably higher than it currently is.

- 8.3 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) not required as the move to IER has been prescribed in legislation.

9.0 APPENDICES

- 9.1 None.

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<b><u>Background Documents</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Contact Officer</u></b>
Report from South Cambridgeshire District Council on IER	Room 214 The Grange Ely	Tracy Couper – Principal Democratic Services Officer (01353) 616278 E-mail: <a href="mailto:tracy.couper@eastcambs.gov.uk">tracy.couper@eastcambs.gov.uk</a> Joan Cox – Electoral Services Officer (01353) 616460 E-mail: <a href="mailto:joan.cox@eastcambs.gov.uk">joan.cox@eastcambs.gov.uk</a>