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**To: Scrutiny Coordination Committee**

**Date: 9 March 2016**

**Subject: Annual Canvass Update**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To provide information to the Committee on the outcome of the 2015 Annual Canvass under the new requirements following the introduction of individual Electoral Registration (IER). The report also details up to date electorate figures following additional activities following the completion of the Canvass.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee notes the outcome and makes any comments or recommendations to the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) for consideration.

## **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 During the last 2 years the ERO has been preparing for the introduction of IER which has been monitored by the Electoral Arrangements Advisory Panel which has received regular updates in relation to Individual Electoral Registration (IER).
- 3.2 The legislation requires the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to send to all properties in their area a Household Enquiry Form (HEF). The HEF is an information gathering form which provides the ERO with information of who is currently residing at the property aged 16 and above. It is not a method of voter registration for new electors or for removing people who are no longer residing at the property.
- 3.3 Those potential electors (also known as pending electors) identified on the HEF are sent an Invitation to Register (ITR) (if they haven't already applied online). The ITR requires the information to register to vote (including national insurance number and date of birth).
- 3.4 The HEF asked any new electors to go to the government website and complete their registration details.

## **4 2015 Annual Canvass – The first full household Canvass under IER**

- 4.1 From 31 July, each property in the City received a HEF. Information was pre-printed on the form as to who if anyone was registered at that property. These were hand delivered by our Canvassers.

- 4.2 Households that did not respond to the initial HEF were sent a reminder from 27<sup>th</sup> August. Households that did not respond to the initial or reminder were sent a second reminder from 17<sup>th</sup> September. Both these forms were hand delivered by our Canvassers.
- 4.3 Any non-responders to the reminders received a personal visit by one of our Canvassers between the 8<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
- 4.4 The initial HEF received a 38% response rate, the first reminder stage increased the overall response rate by 15% to 53%, the second reminder stage increased the overall response rate by 12% to 65%.
- 4.5 The effectiveness of the door-to-door canvass has a major impact on the final response rate for the annual canvass. It is important to note that it no longer means that the register is as complete as it would have been under the previous legislation as mentioned in 1.2 above. Canvassers were required to visit all properties which had not responded to the previous forms on a minimum of two occasions (unless they obtained a response sooner) to encourage the household to respond. They were instructed to visit the property at a different time of the day and on a different day of the week. Where there was no response, a calling card was left, and on the final visit the form was left which detailed the implications of not returning the form.
- 4.6 This year canvassing returned a 21% response rate to the HEF, giving an 86% overall response rate to the HEF. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown, in Ward and Constituency, of the number of properties that did not respond to the HEF in 2015.
- 4.7 From 18<sup>th</sup> August ITRs were sent out to any potential elector identified on the HEF that had not already applied online. ITRs were sent out on a weekly or fortnightly basis, to get the information to electors as quickly as possible.
- 4.8 If the ITR is not returned by a potential elector then the ERO is required to send two reminders and make a personal visit, the same as the HEF process. Personal visits for non-responding ITRs commenced in November 2015. The ERO is required to send an ITR to a potential elector within 28 days of becoming aware of them this is continuously thorough out the year.
- 4.9 Electoral services completed promotion work around the canvass to encourage responses to the HEF and ITR and will continue to do so. Attached at Appendix 2 is the engagement activities which were conducted during the canvass period. Further activities have been conducted since the completion of the canvass and will continue up to the last date for registration for the elections in May 2016.
- 4.10 A report of electors was produced where an individual registration had been received but the HEF had not been responded to and the team tried to make contact where contact details had been supplied to confirm the response to the HEF.
- 4.11 On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2015 3,571 unconfirmed electors were deleted from the electoral register. These Electors were on the July 2014 electoral register, however their details did not match up with government or local records. They have been through the ITR process twice first time during 2014 and again during this canvass and as at the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the ERO had still not received the relevant information from them to register them individually on the electoral register, and therefore in accordance with the decision made by John Penrose MP on 16 July 2015 these electors were deleted from the electoral register.

Appendix 1 shows the number of unconfirmed electors removed from the register on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

- 4.12 From all the work carried out during the canvass on the 1<sup>st</sup> December there were 17,889 pending electors. The pending electors figure are the people who have been identified during the canvass as potential electors but have not yet submitted an individual application. In previous years these names would have been added to the register from the household form so when you consider the electorate figure with the pending elector figure we have not lost any people; they need to make applications and have their identities verified so that they can be included on the register. These potential electors are at different stages in the process, depending on when we have become aware of them. Some will have only received one form, some two, some three and others will be on a personal visit. This process will continue throughout the year, however these are the key forms for us as these are people who have been identified as potential electors. Our engagement work will focus around trying to get responses to these forms. Work is being carried out with the Council's Insight Team to establish if there is any pattern to the areas where these forms are not being returned to help inform our participation strategy.
- 4.13 Appendix 1 shows electorate figures from the last full property canvass which finished in February 2014, together with 1 December 2014 figures. The main difference between last year and this year's figures is the deletion of the unconfirmed electors. The number of pending electors has also been included so to show how many are currently in the IER application process. The appendix also shows the number of properties which have not responded to the canvass however it is important to note that the impact of this is not the main focus as response to the HEF does not mean registration as this has to be done individually through the ITR process.
- 4.14 Attached at appendix 3 is comparison electorate figures across the West Midlands group of authorities.
- 4.15 Attached at appendix 4 is updated electorate figures as at 1 March 2016.

## 5 **Lessons Learnt**

- 5.1 This was the first annual canvass since the introduction of IER, the processes changed significantly from previous canvasses. In that the household form is an enquiry form rather than a registration form which means it just provides information to the ERO which he then has to action to get the registrations or remove people from the register. The legislation is now more focussed on encouragement particularly around the ITRs as it is likely that people may not want to provide personal details such as the National Insurance Number and Date of Birth on the door step.
- 5.2 A project plan was in place to manage the canvass processes that took place and feedback and lessons learned from this canvass will be implemented as part of a more comprehensive plan for 2016 annual canvass.
- 5.3 As part of this part of this project plan, the Electoral Registration Officer will be working even more closely with Coventry University and the University of Warwick, residential care homes, sheltered accommodation, housing association partners, Landlords of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Council departments such as Council Tax to share information to identify potential electors and hopefully increase voter registration.
- 5.4 The Electoral Services Team have applied to the Cabinet Office to be one of several authorities to be considered to conduct this year's annual canvass under pilot provisions which means we can change some of the methods of contact at different stages. The purpose of the pilots is to reduce costs and streamline processes whilst increasing response rates for both HEFs and ITRs.

### **AUTHOR'S NAME, DIRECTORATE AND TELEPHONE NUMBER**

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**Appendix 1**

Constituency	Electorate as at 17/2/14	Electorate as at 1/12/14 ^^	Electorate as at 1/6/15 **	Electorate as at 1/12/15	No of Properties Empty 1/09/14	No of Properties Empty 1/12/15	Pending Electors at 1/12/15	Unconfirmed Electors removed 1/12/15	No of Properties not responded 1/12/15
<b>North East</b>									
Foleshill	12326	12238	12385	11505	1194	1485	1250	355	1678
Henley	13551	13634	13734	13131	706	884	749	242	1398
Longford	13714	13676	13817	13253	697	872	620	202	1249
Lower Stoke	14184	14193	14792	14207	1027	1130	1033	197	1268
Upper Stoke	13402	13148	13340	12683	874	1049	832	251	1214
Wyken	13058	13019	13080	12635	407	588	655	155	603
Constituency Total	80235	79908	81148	77414	4905	6008	5139	1402	7410
<b>North West</b>									
Bablake	12662	12716	12952	12611	402	447	433	123	616
Holbrook	12736	12712	12919	12294	541	749	809	215	732
Radford	13286	13191	13418	12715	1022	1201	821	287	1370
Sherbourne	12378	11927	12183	11641	1035	1331	732	160	1199
Whoberley	11787	11645	12010	11308	831	880	888	231	1111
Woodlands	13126	13402	13772	13413	775	770	621	109	840
Constituency Total	75975	75593	77254	73982	4606	5378	4304	1125	5868
<b>South</b>									
Binley and Willenhall	12448	12483	12656	12148	754	804	662	154	1227
Cheylesmore	12347	12170	12367	11775	568	764	706	119	654
Earlsdon	12521	12296	12503	11891	523	671	631	153	482
St Michael's	14714	10840	12224	11058	4493	7173	5302	302	3274
Wainbody	13178	9556	11264	10953	1638	3183	324	127	300
Westwood	13118	12843	13259	12663	811	916	821	189	1203
Constituency Total	78326	70188	74273	70488	8787	13511	8446	1044	7140
Coventry Total	234536	225689	232675	221884	18298	24897	17889	3571	20418

**Please see notes overleaf**

^^ Please note this figure was after all electors who had not responded to the canvass were deleted and the first register where students were not bulk registered.

\*\* Please note this figure is inflated due to registration levels for the election and removals not taking place.

Please note that in the University areas each room in the halls of residence is classed as a property which is why in St Michael's and Wainbody empty properties is higher than the average.

Please also note that all the properties may not be empty as included in the empty property figure are properties where non-eligible electors live, as they cannot currently be differentiated on the electoral management system.

The high number of pending electors in St Michael's could be down to students being added to send invitations to register to but may not have responded as they are registered elsewhere.

## Phase 1 - Annual Household Canvass and Outreach (July – November 2015)

Our objectives	How we deliver it	The resources that we use	How we measure our success	Update
<b>Encourage householders to respond to obtain information to encourage individuals to register</b>				
Emphasise the reasons why householders need to respond, including the legal requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflet included with HEF (July/August), updated Electoral Services web pages (August), Facebook and Twitter updates (August/September), Cityvision</li> <li>Promotional Event in West Orchards October Half Term</li> <li>Production of 3 adverts which can be streamed, used on website, large screen televisions etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost included in HEF production costs</li> <li>Support of Communications Team</li> <li>Budget £5000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of responses to initial HEF</li> <li>Number of website "hits" via the link to the election pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response levels included in report</li> </ul>
Visit every non-responding property to obtain potential elector details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a recruitment plan to recruit canvassers across the city (June/July)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate canvass budget</li> <li>Support of Communications Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canvassers employed to every area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of properties requiring visit included in report</li> </ul>
<b>Work to encourage Individual Electoral Registration and promote voting with first-time voters and young people</b>				
Emphasise why people need to register themselves Individually even after responding to the HEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflet included with HEF, Website, Facebook and Twitter update, posters in community buildings, libraries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed budget of £5000</li> <li>Support of Communications Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of individual registration applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
Remind 18 year olds of their newly gained right to vote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birthday cards sent to every registered elector with an 18<sup>th</sup> birthday during the current electoral year (Dec-Nov)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed budget of £400</li> <li>Support of Communications Team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cards sent in a timely manner prior to each birthday</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birthday cards sent on weekly basis to all rising 18 year olds</li> </ul>
Remind 16-18 year olds to register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact made with sixth forms (September) provision of information and visits – September 2015</li> <li>Data obtained from Education team on rising '18' year olds and sending of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visits provided by Electoral Services Team</li> <li>Information sharing with Youth Service and Education teams</li> <li>Costs included in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of registered 16-18 year olds monitored</li> <li>Feedback from schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2107 names were added as potential electors of rising 16/17 year olds at beginning of December 2565 of the names were already included on the register.</li> </ul>

	Invitation to register forms	annual canvass budget		
<b>Provide press releases to help effective local reporting of the Annual Household Canvass</b>				
Issue a press release detailing the registration process and the reasons why households should respond ASAP	Press release issued to coincide with first delivery of registration forms Twitter and Facebook messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No financial cost</li> <li>Support of Communications Team</li> </ul>		
<b>Promote registration during Local Democracy Week</b>				
Undertake activities as agreed in LDW programme	Delivered during the nationally designated week (October) Promotional activities held at appropriate events Publicity of events to promote participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposed budget of £2000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from events</li> </ul>	Evaluation included in the report

## Comparison of Electorates across the West Midlands

	Coventry	Birmingham	Solihull	Wolverhampton	Dudley	Sandwell	Walsall
Electorate December 2014	225,689	728,732	158,088	178,638	239,304	227,767	196,219
Electorate December 2015	232,675	738,610	159,807	179,927	240,308	229,551	198,746
Electorate December 2015	221,884	707,998	155,354	176,129	241,457	223,643	189,961
Unconfirmed Electors Jan-15	12,622	69,829	6,818	8,795	6,703	7,998	6,256
Unconfirmed electors Deleted on 1 December 2015	3,571	35,079	2,090	1,687	2,523	1,951	2,050

Percentage change  
between  
December 2014  
and December  
2015

-1.68%      -2.84%      -1.73%      -1.40%      0.90%      -1.81%      -3.19%



Constituency	Electorate as at 1/12/14 <sup>^</sup>	Electorate as at 1/6/15 <sup>**</sup>	Electorate as at 1/12/15	Electorate as at 1/2/16	Electorate as at 1/3/16	No of Properties Empty 1/12/15	No of Properties Empty 1/3/16
<b>North East</b>							
Foleshill	12238	12385	11505	11774	11940	1485	1430
Henley	13634	13734	13131	13263	13481	884	928
Longford	13676	13817	13253	13353	13455	872	891
Lower Stoke	14193	14792	14207	14475	14811	1130	1090
Upper Stoke	13148	13340	12683	12795	12905	1049	1031
Wyken	13019	13080	12635	12742	12974	588	569
Constituency Total	79908	81148	77414	78402	79566	6008	5939
<b>North West</b>							
Bablake	12716	12952	12611	12719	12813	447	436
Holbrook	12712	12919	12294	12445	12637	749	853
Radford	13191	13418	12715	12876	13070	1201	1178
Sherbourne	11927	12183	11641	11785	11891	1331	1304
Whoberley	11645	12010	11308	11427	11590	880	833
Woodlands	13402	13772	13413	13537	13655	770	757
Constituency Total	75593	77254	73982	74789	75656	5378	5361
<b>South</b>							
Binley and Willenhall	12483	12656	12148	12248	12412	804	768
Cheylesmore	12170	12367	11775	11898	12059	764	719
Earlsdon	12296	12503	11891	11999	12159	671	645
St Michael' s	10840	12224	11058	11430	11454	7173	7014
Wainbody	9556	11264	10953	11026	9825	3183	3177
Westwood	12843	13259	12663	12727	12750	916	962
Constituency Total	70188	74273	70488	71328	70659	13511	13285
Coventry Total	225689	232675	221884	224519	225881	24897	24585

<sup>^</sup> Please note this figure was after all electors who had not responded to the canvass were deleted and the first register where students were not bulk registered.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Please note this figure is inflated due to registration levels for the election and removals not taking place.

Please note that in the University areas each room in the halls of residence is classed as a property which is why in St Michael's and Wainbody empty properties is higher than the average.

The high number of pending electors in these wards are also down to students being added to send invitations to register to but may not respond as they are registered elsewhere.

Please also note that all the properties may not be empty as they are included in this figure if there are no eligible electors in these properties.

