

Appendices:
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NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	Individual Electoral Registration
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Committee Meeting Date:	9 th July 2013
Policy Document:	No
Directorate:	Chief Executive/Borough Secretary

1. Purpose

1.1 To update the Committee about progress on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the actions Officers are taking to implement IER.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Council notes the changes taking place to registration processes and the work Officers are undertaking to implement the changes.

2.2 That the Committee notes the additional cost and resource required to implement the changes to Electoral Registration.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

3.1.1 The register of electors is the Electoral Services foundation, providing a record of those people entitled to vote at various UK elections. At present, Electoral Services carry out an annual canvass each year by sending a registration form to each household. One person is responsible for completing this form and for registering every eligible person at that address.

3.1.2 On 31 January 2013, the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 gained Royal Assent requiring the move to a system of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). This will require each elector to register individually, rather

than via a household form as at the moment. It will also have other implications, such as moving the canvass to Winter 2013/14, more information can be found at the following link

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/154093/ERO-letter-support-on-IER-from-CO-EC-final.pdf

- 3.1.3 Implementation of Individual Electoral Registration is now only one year away, scheduled for 1 July 2014.
- 3.1.4 IER is intended to tackle electoral fraud and result in a more accurate and complete register, requiring each person to confirm they live at a property rather than relying on one person to sign for the household.
- 3.1.5 The Association of Electoral Administrators (the organisation providing support and representation for election professionals) is supportive of IER and has been campaigning for a decade for its introduction, although it recognises that moving to the new system will require many changes, including changes to IT support systems. Consequently additional grant funding has been made available by Government to support this.
- 3.1.6 Data matching will be initially used to verify applications and this will be done by electronically matching council data to Department of Work and Pensions data.
- 3.1.7 Staff members have attended various training/update sessions to prepare for the changes and staff from electoral registration have, along with a County Working Group for IER, have attended a workshop run by their software supplier, which showed the complexity of the administration of IER, and some of their solutions to enable a smooth process. This was also a good forum for colleagues to discuss their plans for dealing with IER and raised some interesting issues, outlined below.
- 3.1.8 There will be a Confirmation Dry Run (CDR) on 30 July 2013, which will tell Local Authorities exactly the scale of the job in 2014. This is where all our data is sent securely to the Cabinet Office, who will then send it securely to the Department of Work and Pensions. The data is then matched against theirs and report sent back to us detailing which data matches and which does not, using a RAG system (Red, Amber, Green). If an elector is Green there is no problem, if Amber, most data matches but maybe the postcode is incorrect and needs checking. If they are Red, we need to check all of their data.
- 3.1.9 Already, the electoral services office are liaising with the Cabinet Office via working groups and email, maintaining a web portal which details our readiness for the Confirmation Dry Run, taking place on 30 July 2013.
- 3.1.10 The Borough Secretary will be reviewing the level of staffing support Electoral Services will need to properly and effectively support implementation of EIR. Currently the intention is to bring in a part-time, fixed term member of staff to support and help drive through the changes.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

None affected.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 The Government is committed to funding the costs of moving to Individual Electoral Registration, estimated to be £108.3 million. However, what happens after that is a source of concern. The costs of printing alone are expected to increase as multiple forms are required for different electors. In additions, due to the increase in administration costs, there will likely be increased staffing costs.
- 4.2.2 As detailed above in 3.1.6, the data matching could be very resource intensive, resulting in a need for increased staffing levels, taking longer than usual to register someone at an address. However, end result would be more accurate.
- 4.2.3 There have already been two workshops dedicated to IER and there are more planned. All members of the electoral team need to attend, it is not enough to cascade information as is usual. Obviously this means an increase in cost of attending, plus time out of the office, meaning day to day tasks may be delayed.
- 4.2.4 The Council has already received £9,233.64 from the Cabinet Office, £5,285.35 for the change implementation and £3,948.28 for the Confirmation Dry Run. The £5,285.35 is based on Northampton's percentage of the GB population of 0.3%.
- 4.2.5 IER will have an impact on resources not only in electoral services but IT who have been involved in ensuring readiness for the Confirmation Dry Run. They will also be involved thereafter in the maintenance of the system. It's unknown at the moment whether or not this will involve an increased workload.

4.3 Legal

- 4.3.1 Non-implementation of IER is not an option. The Council are under a statutory duty to administer this. The Cabinet Office are monitoring progress very closely and as mentioned in 3.1.7 a web portal is being maintained by electoral services staff, detailing where we are in the process.

4.4 Equality

- 4.4.1 The report does not address equality issues specifically but the basic intent of IER (or indeed registration in any guise) is to enable everyone who is entitled to register to vote in UK elections and exercise their democratic rights. Any actions will fully comply with the Council's equality duties.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 N/A

4.6 Other Implications

4.6.1 None

5. Background Papers

- 5.1 Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- 5.2 Letter from Chloe Smith MP – Minister for Political & Constitutional Reform
- 5.3 Electoral Registration Transformation Programme Report - Cabinet Office
- 5.4 Confirmation Dry Run Schedule – Cabinet Office Final Version 18.6.13

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