

# INTERNAL BRIEFING PAPER

## Individual Electoral Registration



**For:** Members of Regulatory and Licensing Committee  
**Date:** 25 September 2013

### KEY FACTS

- **Status:** To introduce Members to the changes to household electoral registration brought about by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.
- **Purpose:** To inform Members of the key activities required in the transition to Individual Electoral Registration by 2015.

### BACKGROUND

In June 2011 the Government announced plans for a fundamental change to the way we register to vote, by introducing Individual Electoral Registration (IER).

#### What is IER?

At present, one person in every household is responsible for registering everyone else who lives at that address. The Government is proposing that, from summer 2014, each person will be required to register to vote individually, rather than by household.

Under the proposed new system, individuals would be asked to provide 'identifying information', such as a date of birth and national insurance number, when they apply to register. This would allow each person's application to be verified before they were added to the register. People who were unable to supply this information would be able to provide an alternative form of evidence of their identity.

People who fail to register under the new system in 2014 would have their registration carried forward to 2015 - ensuring that they would be registered to vote at the 2015 UK general election. However, postal or proxy voters would need to register under the new system from 2014 or they would automatically lose the right to use this method of voting. Anyone who has moved house or changed their name would also be required to register under the new system.

People who have not moved house or do not require a postal or proxy vote would have until the end of the autumn 2015 annual canvass to register under the new system. Those who have not registered individually and had their identity verified by then would be removed from the register.

#### Work so far

In 2011 and 2012 the Cabinet Office worked with several local authorities to trial the new business processes and capability which will deliver IER. These pilots led the Government to announce proposals to simplify the transition to IER for most citizens by matching their entries on the current electoral register with data held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and, where a match was found, automatically confirming them on to the new IER electoral register and avoiding the need for them to re-apply. The pilots provided strong support for the policy of confirmation and established that around 70% of electors could be confirmed in this way and that there was the potential to further increase these match rates through the use of other local or national datasets.

We anticipate, following a Confirmation Dry Run (CDR) exercise in July 2013, where we submitted our electoral register to the IER Government Digital Service for test data matching with Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) records that in July 2014 we will have approximately:-

- 66646 "confirmed" electors with a positive match against the DWP records (representing 83% of electors) and who will be transferred automatically onto the new IER electoral register, requiring no further action from them. We will still need to write to them and advise them of this.
- 3126 households that failed to match, or only partially matched the DWP records and will need to be sent a household enquiry form to establish how many citizens are in the household so they can be individually invited to register under IER.
- 12404 electors who did not match the DWP record exactly and who will need to be sent an invitation to register.

A Clean and  
Safe  
Environment

A Thriving  
Economy

A Good Place  
to Live

A Quality of Life

A Joint Effort



## ISSUES

### Managing Change

The introduction of IER in Great Britain will be the biggest change to the voter registration process since the universal franchise was introduced. It requires careful planning and implementation and needs to be done in a way that puts the voter first and is easily explained and understood.

Our public engagement activities need to address the challenge of getting people to take action to join or remain on the register under an unfamiliar system. Effective use of all media channels will be key in raising awareness and necessary to encourage and support residents through the transition and maximise the number of voters registered under IER.

IER will also be a significant change for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) who will need time to prepare for its introduction; in particular, updating their systems to ensure security of personal data and to enable them to check the information provided and ensuring the appropriate staffing resources are in place. The system should be capable of being implemented efficiently and without a detrimental impact on the existing duties and responsibilities of the ERO.

### Funding

The Government is committed to funding the full cost of the transition to IER and any additional costs post transition, over and above the current cost of electoral registration. They recognise that many ERO's are concerned that in a time of budget pressures, the money for IER should be allocated in a way that ensures that the transition is properly funded and that the funding is used for the purposes for which it has been provided.

## FUTURE ACTIONS

**September 2013:** to consider the costs and benefits of local data matching, such as council tax and benefits (which is not mandatory) and whether to undertake this activity to improve confirmation rates.

**By November 2013:** to complete a full test of the matching and verification services including an analysis and understanding of our results from CDR and confirm we have plans for sufficient staff and resources for transition in 2014 and 2015.

**October-February 2014:** carry out the final old style household canvass and publish a new register on 17 February 2014.

**June/July 2014:** begin the transition to the new system after the European elections by

- Matching current registers against the DWP database to confirm existing electors
- Writing to all confirmed electors to explain that their registration will continue and there is nothing else for them to do
- Writing out to, and reminding any non-confirmed electors, in addition to inviting others who are potentially eligible but missing from the register to apply

**1 December 2014:** to publish a new register, including all electors confirmed under IER

**January to March 2015:** to carry out targeted activity to invite further missing electors and those who may have moved, to update their registration. Also write to people encouraging those not on the register to apply.

**Autumn 2015 - following the May 2015 General Election:** to carry out a full household canvass under the new system.

## RISK

(Amber risks taken from Risk Register and based on the impact on the 5Ms - Machines, Methods, Money, Manpower (Staff), Management & reporting.)

### Manpower

- Insufficient resources within the electoral team
- Initial allocation of funds for 2013/14 proves insufficient to secure adequate staffing resources during 2013/14
- Key election and canvass activities coincide (i.e. core team resources overwhelmed)

### Money

- Formulae used for allocation of funds doesn't match requirement of the Authority for activities required to be carried out during the preparation for IER, such as the higher volume of printing and postage

### Management and reporting

- The volume of information being released by the programme could cause overload
- Focus on IER implementation means existing electoral/licensing workload is not manageable

## KEY BENEFITS & OUTCOMES

- IER will address vulnerabilities in the current electoral registration process by improving the accurateness and completeness of the electoral register by ensuring that anyone who is not eligible to vote is not included in an electoral register and every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered.
- It places a personal responsibility on an individual to register to vote and hopefully encourages residents - particularly those that have previously been hard to reach such as young people and students - to be part of the democratic process and to use their vote.
- More convenient for eligible citizens to register to vote by giving them a greater choice over how to register, such as the ability to apply online.
- Aims to increase public trust in our elections.

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