

Report to:	<b>Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>5 September 2011</b>
Report by:	<b>Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer</b>

Subject:	<b>Individual Electoral Registration</b>
----------	--

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ Advise members of proposed changes to the system of Electoral Registration
- ◆ Alert members to future resource implications of the proposed changes

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Board is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1) that the contents of the report are noted

## 3. Background

### 3.1. The Political Parties and Elections Act 2009

This Act received Royal Assent on 21 July 2009.

One of the main purposes of the Act was to:-

- *Provide for the phased implementation of individual electoral registration in Great Britain, with additional identifying information (National Insurance (NI) number, date of birth, signature) being provided on a voluntary basis by those wishing to register from 2010 to 2015, and on a compulsory basis from 2015, subject to a positive recommendation by the Electoral Commission and Parliament that the system is ready for the change.*
- *The introduction of the voluntary phase was suspended prior to the 2010 General Election and the matter was reviewed following the election by the resulting coalition government.*

### 3.2 Current Position

A White Paper and draft legislation were published on 30 June 2011. A period of consultation has commenced which concludes on 14 October 2011. The White Paper and draft legislation propose significant changes to the original proposals under the 2009 Act. An Individual Electoral Registration (IER) Bill is expected to be presented to the Westminster Parliament in January 2012 and the Act is expected to receive Royal Assent in December 2012.

### 3.3 Key Drivers for Change

The key drivers for change identified by the Cabinet Office are:-

- Tackle electoral fraud and improve the integrity of the electoral register
- Take steps to improve the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register

- More efficient delivery of electoral registration
- Improve public satisfaction in electoral registration

### **3.4 Key Changes to Electoral Registration under IER**

- There will be no obligation to register to vote
- All applications to register will need to be made individually as opposed to current system of household registration
- All electors will require to provide evidence of identity to register
- All applications will need to be verified before electors are added to the electoral register
- The canvass will change from 2014 with special transitional arrangements in that year for eligible electors who are not registered under IER

### **3.5 How the system is expected to work**

- Electors will be required to provide evidence in order to register:-
  - Likely to be their National Insurance Number (NINO) and Date of Birth (DOB)
  - Signature is not required by the draft legislation but this is under review as part of the consultation exercise
  - other means may be considered
- Evidence should only be required once unless circumstances change
- An exceptions process will be put in place for those unwilling or unable to provide a NINO. This is likely to involve a personal visit to the ERO's office to provide alternative evidence.
- Provision will be made to allow registration through a variety of "channels". This will include internet registration.

### **3.6 Requirements for ERO**

- Under the terms of the draft legislation, an ERO will need to be satisfied that:-
  - each application for inclusion in the electoral register is made in respect of a person who is eligible to register
  - each person making an application is the person who is the subject of the application
  - the address in respect of which the application is made is genuine
  - there is evidence of a connection between the individual and the address to determine residence.

### **3.7 Individual Electoral Registration in 2014**

- First IER canvass will commence on 1 July 2014
- All new registrations will need to be made through IER
- Existing electors can carry their registration forward without providing personal identifiers for this canvass only
- Registered electors will receive personally addressed applications, including an insert to identify additional occupants

- Empty properties and households where there is doubt that an elector is still resident will be sent a new form - the Household Enquiry Form - designed by the Electoral Commission
- Electoral Commission will provide an awareness campaign
- Those who fail to respond and are deemed eligible will be carried forward to enable participation in 2015 General Election
- Electors can indicate that they do not wish to receive further invitations during that canvass period (i.e. they can indicate that they do not want to register to vote)
- Electors must be registered under IER to cast a postal vote or vote as a nominated proxy
- New electoral registers will need to be published by 1 December as usual

### **3.8 Individual Electoral Registration in 2015 and beyond**

- The 2015 annual canvass and any future canvasses will request data on all persons resident in every household.
- A new form – Household Enquiry Form – designed by Electoral Commission will be sent to all properties in 2015 and at future canvasses
- Electors who were carried forward at 2014 without having provided personal identifiers will be issued with an IER form. If they do not provide these at the 2015 canvass they will be removed from the register
- Where new electors are identified they will be issued with an IER form
- Following 2015 canvass, the electoral register will consist only of electors who have made individual applications under IER
- Revised electoral registers will need to be published by 1 December as usual

### **3.9 Amending or abolishing the Annual Canvass**

Clause 6 of the draft legislation allows for future changes to the timing or style of the annual canvass and also makes provision for its abolition.

### **3.10 Challenges for the Joint Board**

This change to the system of electoral registration poses a number of challenges to the Joint Board.

#### **3.10.1 Business Systems**

- IT systems will require to be reviewed with consideration given to migration to an alternative supplier
- Operational procedures will require to be reviewed/reengineered
- Interfaces will require to be developed to allow registration by alternative “channels” and for verification of identifiers (e.g. with Department of Work and Pensions in respect of NINOs).

#### **3.10.2 Resources**

- Staffing numbers, functions and skills will require to be reviewed
- The cost of business change will need to be quantified
- Transitional costs of moving from one system to another with duplication in 2014 and 2015 will need to be met

### **3.10.3 Training**

- Training/retraining of staff will be required in a number of key areas:
- Use of new/amended IT systems
- New verification procedures
- Understanding personal identifiers
- Protection / security of data

### **3.10.4 Project Management**

The implementation of the changes will require to be properly project managed at a national and local level. Locally, the Joint Board is well placed to deal with this with all senior managers having project management training.

### **3.10.5 Third Party suppliers**

Contracts with third party suppliers of services will require to be reviewed or renegotiated with a retendering process probable.

### **3.11 Summary**

The proposed system is a radical change to Electoral Registration in Great Britain. This involves a move from the long established system of household registration which involved a degree of compulsion to a system of individual registration which is essentially voluntary.

While the full implementation of the changes appears to be a number of years away, transitional arrangements will need to be put in place as early as possible. If steps are not taken to maximise completeness and accuracy of the existing registers between now and the implementation of IER in 2014 and 2015, there will be a significant risk of the loss of large numbers of electors in the run up to the next Scottish Parliament elections in May 2016.

## **4. Employee Implications**

- 4.1. See 3.10.2 and 3.10.3 above.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1. See 3.10 above. It is understood that the Cabinet Office has ring fenced funding for the implementation of the new system. It is not yet clear however how much funding will be provided to individual areas and how this will be channelled. It is also likely that any such funding will cover a fixed period of time and longer term funding for the new system will need to be considered.

## **6. Other Implications**

- 6.1. The new system carries with it a risk of a significant loss of electors from the register of electors. If sufficient resources are not identified to implement the new system, there is a risk of failure to achieve a new statutory duty. The Joint Board's risk register will be updated to record these new risks and steps being taken to mitigate them.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 7.1. The Cabinet Office have advised that they will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment and have already commenced the process of consultation.

## **8. Privacy Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 The security of personal data will be an integral part of the implementation of the new system and each phase of the resulting project will be subject to a privacy impact assessment.

**Edward P Duffy**  
**Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer**

16 August 2011

### **Previous References**

- Progress Report, December 2009
- Progress Report, November 2010

### **List of Background Papers**

None

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Edward P Duffy, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Phone: 01698 476078

E-mail: [assessor@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:assessor@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)