

**Report for:** Corporate Committee 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Item number:** 10

**Title:** Individual Electoral Registration Transition Year 2 (IER 2) – current status.

**Report authorised by :** Assistant Director of Corporate Governance

**Lead Officer:** George Cooper , Head of Electoral Services

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Non-key

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

This report outlines the status of the second year of the new Individual Electoral Registration system in the context of the “end of transition ” to the System.

**2. Recommendations**

The Committee note the actions taken in pursuit of Electoral Registration thus far, and endorse the determination of the Electoral Registration Officer to continue pro-active registration campaigning beyond 1 December 2015.

**3. Reasons for decision**

- 3.1 To confirm that transition to IER has formally ended ( further to a Parliamentary vote in October ) and that therefore, names un- matched or non-responding to registration queries will be removed from the electoral register on the basis that they no longer *in situ*.
- 3.2 The Register will form the bedrock of elections to the Mayoralty of London and the Greater London Assembly on 5 May 2016, and may well have that role if the European Union Membership Referendum is held shortly afterwards, as it could be. Registration may take place at any time so there should be a continuation of extensive registration campaigning to take account of high turnover of electors between 1 December and scheduled Polls.
- 3.3 Another important, but “one-off,” role for the Register is that it will form the basis for the re-drawing of Parliamentary Boundaries. The Act which requires the Boundary changes also envisages the reduction in the number of MPs from 650 to 600. This in turn is likely to mean that Haringey will no longer have two constituencies contained wholly within its own boundaries, regardless of the size of the electorate on 1 December 2015.

3.4 New Boundaries must also meet a new constraint such that no constituency could depart from more or less than 5% of a set electoral figure, to be defined on 1 December 2015. There are only isolated exceptions permitted – Islands. To meet this constraint everywhere will likely mean that even constituencies which in isolation have the appropriate number might still see boundary changes.

#### 4. **Alternative options considered**

Electoral Registration is a statutory function and IER 2 has been carried out according to the prescriptions of the 2013 Electoral Registration and Administration Act.

#### 5. **Background information**

5.1 The Register across Haringey by which the Parliamentary General Election was conducted was the highest since 1987. It should be noted that “sign-ups” gathered pace as the Election approached, so the roll was much higher by April than it was in December – many people will act when there is a focus to do so, and Haringey typically has a 29% churn over a period of twelve months.

5.2 Non-response and, indeed, death will, in practice, remove people from a register more immediately than new electors are added – because electoral registration is not often the first priority for many people moving into an area, and areas such as inner London with such high churn are characterised by a large current of people who believe they will move on again quickly so don’t register. We “catch up” as people realise an election is approaching, as they decide to put down roots, and as their credit records require updating.

5.3 Population is rising in Haringey, but not necessarily the Parliamentary electorate portion (ie British, Commonwealth and Irish citizens) of it – 2015 was a particular high water mark of saturation registration and this was arguably reflected in the turnout. We utilise Census figures and other election results to evaluate such trends and to give us a picture of the size of the likely electorate.

5.4 IER 2 is markedly different to IER 1 in that it did not *start* with comprehensive Department of Work and Pensions DWP data matching, but with the distribution of Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) to every dwelling – this commenced in August. The data-matching methodology and capacity to register online are still there as the groundbreaking features of IER 1, and indeed we have added a data-matching agreement across the Council, but IER 2 has elongated the registration process for new electors in that the HEF form does not necessarily complete their registration. It is necessary to complete an Invitation to Register (ITR) which is sent out once a HEF has identified the *new* names to be included.

5.5 With high churn and many new electors, this elongation of the process again means that “removal” can be a quicker process than “addition.” Some electors react badly to having complete two forms.

- 5.6 Direct Cabinet Office funding has essentially financed the transition. Over the two years of transition, it has been invested in seconded staffing to support the more complex “evidence based “ registration processes, to enhance customer service in what is a more demanding process for many, in tablets that link straight to the system and then “disappear” details after transmission to reassure electors that very personal ITR details are not simply being carried around by paper, in extensive marketing to raise awareness of the changes, and in better canvasser training.
- 5.7 It should be said that if electors have incomplete information on the doorstep, our canvassers are directing them to the online registration option which was such a vital feature of the change to IER and which can be completed any time. Online applications for new electors has, in Haringey, so far run some way ahead of the national 75% figure.
- 5.8 Activity since first despatch of HEFs has, then, included sending out reminders and ITRs and now, at the time of writing, we have 70 Canvassers undertaking a door-knocking process, out on the doorsteps to collect either HEFs or ITRs and doing this day in, day out as close as possible to 1 December when IER transition formally ends and a Register is published. I would anticipate that our new year campaign will , like last year, bring in the “catch – up” factors listed above.
- 5.9 We have progressively enhanced our Social Media presence to support our canvassers, we will also still be posting extra reminders until the very end – sometimes around nine forms of communication will have been tried, as the responsible Minister has indicated several times . We are aware of other groups pushing registration, including for example Hope not Hate, are liaising with Educational institutions to assist students to register, and have been using our data – sharing agreement to seek to identify and confirm registrations in addition to DWP matching. Registration information has been affirmed as part part of the Citizenship ceremony.

## **6. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

The electoral registration campaign is one of the few corporate activities that seeks to reach every single household and contributes an important perspective to other parts of the Council about the shape and scale of our community.

## **7. Legal and Financial implications**

- 7.1 Registration is a statutory function carried out to a heavily – prescribed timetable as indicated above.
- 7.2 The funding for IER transition – some £371,000 over two years, some by direct grant and some by application, has been directed towards the more complex costs of individual rather than household registration, to the elongated registration process and considerable extra postage that this entails, and to the specific initiatives identified in this report.

7.3 Notwithstanding the end of the transition, the Cabinet Office may be promulgating a series of pilot schemes in 2016 to simplify IER 2 and so reduce both costs and complexity.

**8. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

- a. Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- b. Electoral Commission Guidance on Household Canvass