



# Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Report to:** Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Meeting on:** 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**Subject:** Electoral Update Report

**Author:** Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

## 1. Introduction

This report is to inform board members of any updates to Electoral Registration legislation and report to the Board on any electoral events.

## 2. 2022 Canvass

- 2.1 The 2022 canvass started on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022, and publication of the revised register took place on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.
- 2.2 The published revised local government register contained the following number of Electors:

Council Area	Electorate as at 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2022
East Renfrewshire	73,583
Inverclyde	60,632
Renfrewshire	141,025

## 3. Future Elections

- 3.1 At the time of writing no elections are scheduled.

## 4. Elections Act 2022

- 4.1 The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022. The provisions of the Act come into force at various times and elements of it are subject to further Regulations. The main provisions that will impact the Board are the requirement for Voter ID for UK Parliamentary Elections, changes to the Absent Voting application process for the UK Parliamentary Elections and changes to the eligibility to be registered as an Overseas Elector.
- 4.2 The final statutory instruments on Voter Identification were made on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022 and came into force on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Since that date applications for the Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) have been able to be made online or by a paper application form. A VAC will only be required if an elector wishes to vote in person and does not have another approved form of photo ID. The Elections Act sets out the full list of approved forms of ID but examples of approved photo ID's include passport, driving licence and Young Scot cards.
- 4.3 A new ERO portal for processing these applications has been created by the UK Government and staff have undertaken training in its use. At the time of writing 11 applications have been received.

- 4.4 A funding allocation for implementing Voter Identification has been determined by the UK Government, for 2022/23 we have received £8,791 and are due to receive £8,603 in 2023/24.
- 4.5 The Elections Act 2022 also brings in changes to the franchise for overseas electors. It is the first legislative step towards removing the 15-year limit on overseas electors being able to vote in UK Parliamentary elections and allowing British citizens overseas who were previously registered or previously resident in the UK to apply to register to vote. The extended franchise is not yet in operation. Secondary legislation is expected to be laid in the coming months which will provide the necessary detail and it is anticipated that these changes arising from the secondary legislation will be in place over the summer of 2023.
- 4.6 The other change being introduced by the Elections Act that will have an impact on the Board is the changes to the rules around absent vote applications. It is likely that applications for an absent vote will be able to be made on line as well as by paper and will go through an identity verification process similar to that undertaken for registration and that a fresh application will be required after three years. Secondary legislation is also required for this change and it is expected that these changes will be in place during the summer of 2023. It should be noted that these changes are only applicable for electors that are applying for an absent vote for a UK Parliamentary election the current arrangements will remain in place for absent vote applications for Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections.
- 4.7 It has been intimated that a funding allocation will be provided by the UK Government for these new burdens during 2023/24, however at this time there is no indication of the amount.

## **5. Absent Vote Identifier Refresh**

- 5.1 As required by Regulations, electors who have a postal or proxy vote whose signature on the personal identifiers record is more than 5 years old will be sent a notice requesting them to supply a fresh signature during January, voters will have six weeks to return a fresh signature or they will lose their postal or proxy vote. Where necessary a reminder was issued after 3 weeks. There were approximately 6300 signature refresh notices issued and we recently issued just over 3000 reminders.

## **6. Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform**

- 6.1 The Scottish Government have published a consultation on Electoral Reform. The consultation, which will close on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 can be viewed at <https://consult.gov.scot/constitution-and-cabinet/electoral-reform/> In line with previous consultations, as ERO I will provide comments to the Scottish Assessors' Association Electoral Registration Committee and they will submit a joint response to the Scottish Government on matters relevant to the ERO's duties.

## **7. Procurement**

- 7.1 With the assistance of Renfrewshire Council's Corporate Procurement Unit progress has been made with our Electoral Management System (EMS) and Print and Mail procurements. The EMS procurement was undertaken using Crown Commercial Services GCloud 13 Framework Agreement and at this stage the recommended supplier is Democracy Counts Ltd. The contract will be for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for a further 12 months contract with a total contract value of £96,000.
- 7.2 The Print and Mail services project is in the early stages and the procurement routes to market are currently being reviewed.

**8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 The Board notes the contents of this report and approves the EMS Procurement referenced at 7.1.

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15<sup>th</sup> February 2023

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