



# Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Report to:** Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Meeting on:** 15th September 2023

**Subject:** Electoral Registration Update Report

**Author:** Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report is to inform board members of work undertaken within Electoral Registration, any updates to legislation and report to the Board on any electoral events.

## **2. Current Position – General**

- 2.1 Work continues on processing all registration applications, including postal, proxy and voter authority certificates, whether made on-line or paper format, in line with statutory timetables.
- 2.2 Since publication of the Register on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, monthly updates have been published, resulting in 14,080 additions to and 11,899 deletions from our Registers.

## **3. 2023 Canvass**

- 3.1 The 2023 canvass started on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023, with publication of the new register due to take place by 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- 3.2 As a precursor to the start of the canvass National Data Matching of the register to the records of DWP took place in early June, with local data matching following. These matching stages helped identify the appropriate form of communication to be issued to each household.
- 3.3 Where an email address is held then the initial contact was by email, and where there was no response then the appropriate letter was issued to the household. In other cases the initial contact was made by letter. Where a response is required then there are a range of options for the elector to utilise including internet, phone and mail.
- 3.4 If an email address wasn't held or there was no response to an email then letters were sent to the property. Where all the electors in a household were data matched then a CCA letter was issued, this letter does not require a response unless the information on it isn't correct. A total of 92,254 CCA letters were issued. In circumstances where not all the electors in a household were data matched then a CCB letter is issued, this letter requires a response to either confirm that the electors shown on it are correct or to inform us of changes. There were 41,099 CCB letters issued.
- 3.5 The final stage of the canvass is a visit to the household for those households where a response was required and none received. This stage will be undertaken throughout the canvass period and will involve visits to approximately 24,000 properties.

- 3.6 In conjunction with many other Scottish EROs and the Electoral Commission, work has been undertaken to produce a leaflet on Voter ID. This is included with our canvass mail communications and our electronic communications include a link to further information on Voter ID.

#### **4. Future Elections**

- 4.1 At the time of writing no elections are scheduled, however a UK Parliamentary General Election will take place by early January 2025. Members of the Team will be attending an Electoral Commission & Electoral Management Board of Scotland seminar in early October along with Returning Officers and their teams, the main theme of the seminar is preparedness for the UK Parliamentary General Election. In addition to this there is also regular contact with the Returning Officer's teams.

#### **5. Elections Act 2022**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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. A full list of acceptable types of photo ID was circulated to members in February 2022 or can be found at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id)
- 5.3 A new ERO portal for processing these applications has been created by the UK Government and staff have undertaken training in its use.
- 5.4 A funding allocation for implementing Voter Identification has been determined by the UK Government, for 2023/24 a grant of £9,509 has been received.
- 5.5 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 was expected to be laid in the summer however this has been delayed and it is now expected to be laid late 2023/early 2024 with changes taking effect in the early part of 2024.
- 5.6 Another 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 for UK Parliamentary Elections 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 was expected that these changes would take place during the summer of 2023, however this has also been delayed and the likely implementation date is now October 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.

- 5.7 The divergence of the rules around absent voting for reserved and devolved elections will result in significant IT changes, training requirements for our staff and new forms are being created by the Electoral Commission, it is probable that separate applications will need to be made by electors that wish a postal vote for both reserved and devolved elections.
- 5.7 A funding allocation for 2023/24 for this second Tranche of changes of £18,638 has been provided by the UK Government for these new burdens.

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

- 6.1 The Scottish Government consultation on Electoral Reform closed on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023, several hundred responses were received including one from the Scottish Assessors Association on behalf of all the Scottish EROs. An analysis report of the consultation responses was published by the Scottish Government on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 with an Electoral Reform Bill forming part of the recently announce programme for government.

## **7. Boundary Commission for Scotland – Review of UK Parliament Constituencies**

- 7.1 The Boundary Commission for Scotland began its 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies in Scotland in January 2021. After going through the required consultation processes it laid its final recommendations before Parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023. It is expected that the final stage of the approval process will be in October 2023 and the new boundaries will take effect from the next General Election called after they have been approved.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 The Board notes the contents of this report

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6th September 2023

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