



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 26th May 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 timetable.
- 2.2 Since publication of the Register on 1st December 2022, monthly updates have been published, resulting in 5,222 additions to and 3,495 deletions from our Registers.

3. 2023 Canvass

- 3.1 The 2023 canvass will start on Monday 3rd July 2023, with publication of the revised register due to take place by 1st December 2023.
- 3.2 As a precursor to the start of the canvass National Data Matching of the register to the records of DWP will take place in early June, with local data matching following. These matching stages help identify the appropriate form of communication to be issued to each household.
- 3.3 Where an email address is held then the initial contact will be by email, and if there is no response then the appropriate letter will be issued to the household. In other cases the initial contact will be by letter. Where a response is required then there will be a range of options for the elector to utilise including internet, phone and mail.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 In conjunction with many other Scottish EROs and the Electoral Commission work has been undertaken to produce a leaflet on Voter ID that can be included with our canvass communication.

4. Future Elections

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

5. Elections Act 2022

- 5.1 The Elections Act 2022 received Royal Assent on 28th 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 22nd December 2022 and came into force on 16th 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
- 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. At the time of writing over 100 applications have been received by us.
- 5.4 A funding allocation for implementing Voter Identification has been determined by the UK Government, for 2022/23 we received £8,791 and for 2023/24 a revised funding allocation 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 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 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 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.

6. Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform

- 6.1 The Scottish Government consultation on Electoral Reform closed on 15th March 2023, several hundred responses were received including one from the Scottish Assessors Association on behalf of all the Scottish EROs. It is expected that the responses and an analysis report will be published by the Scottish Government over the summer.

7. Procurement

- 7.1 With the assistance of Renfrewshire Council's Corporate Procurement Unit, progress has been made with our Print and Mail Contract. The procurement process was undertaken by conducting a direct award (call off contract) under the Scottish Government Postal framework agreement Lot 2 where the sole supplier is Critiqom Ltd. The Call off contract will be for a period of 3 years with the option to extend for a further 12 months and an anticipated total contract value that will not exceed £650,000.

8. Recommendations

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

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15th May 2023

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