



# Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Report to :** Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Meeting on :** 17<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Subject :** Canvass/ Electoral Update Report

**Author :** Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

## 1.0 Introduction

This report is to provide members with an update on the ongoing Electoral Registration Annual Canvass and if necessary any other electoral issues facing the Board.

## 2.0 Annual Canvass

Under IER the Canvass has the following stages:

### 2.1 Issue of Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs):

The first stage of the Canvass was issue of HEFs to all properties in the Joint Board area. These forms invited those at each house to complete and return the form, to respond by telephone or internet and new electors to register online. This year we introduced a change to our issue date and brought it forward from August to 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017, to see what effect, if any, this had on response rates. The numbers issued were as follows, I have shown 2016 Data to allow for comparisons to be made.

Council	Household Enquiry Form 2016	Household Enquiry Form 2017
East Renfrewshire	38,352	38,654
Inverclyde	38,807	38,793
Renfrewshire	84,923	85,561
<b>Total</b>	<b>162,082</b>	<b>163,008</b>

Any changes notified by post, telephone or internet resulted in the issue of an invitation to register ( ITR) which could be completed on-line by using the Government Registration Portal or by personal application via post or telephone call.

## 2.2 Issue of Reminders:

Where no response had been made to the initial issue of HEFs, reminders were issued on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017. The numbers issued were as follows:

Council	2016	2016	2017	2017
	1 <sup>st</sup> Reminder	2 <sup>nd</sup> Reminder	1 <sup>st</sup> Reminder	2 <sup>nd</sup> Reminder
East Renfrewshire	16,141	10,774	16,485	10,657
Inverclyde	18,519	13,668	20,141	13,960
Renfrewshire	41,216	30,407	43,556	30,912
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,876</b>	<b>54,949</b>	<b>80,182</b>	<b>55,529</b>

The issue of Second Reminders was incorporated with the Door-to-Door Canvass.

## 2.3 Door-to-Door Canvass:

IER mandates that at least one visit will be made to properties with electors who have made no response. This will be carried out as part of the Second Reminder exercise.

For this Canvass, we had to arrange a door-to-door visit for properties where we had no response. Temporary Canvassers have been working round these since 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

This is the information we supplied to the EC when providing our canvass update:

The availability of time, funding and canvassers forced us to look closely again at how to deal with the 2nd reminder stage for this year's canvass. We decided to split the 55,529 non returned HEF's into 2 categories:-

Firstly households with recent occupier information (around 20,000) and

Secondly households where we were less confident with the information held as it was either old or there was no occupier information (around 35,000).

We then focused on the 35,000 households with no/old information and sent a canvasser to door knock each household. The 20,000 with recent occupier information were treated as lower priority and were posted as we believed that this was a more efficient way of dealing with them. We first introduced this practice at last year's canvass and we found that we had a better response to these posted Second reminders than we had from the door knock by a canvasser. I intend to monitor returns from those posted again this year and follow-up if necessary.

#### 2.4 Local Secondary Checks:

Under the legislation in force, local data held by Councils and other bodies including Council Tax Billing records, lists of social tenancies and lists of private tenancies cannot be used for this Canvass. This continues to add to the complexity and cost of the Canvass.

#### 2.5 Publication of Registers:

This takes place on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

#### 2.6 Boundary Review:

The 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies is at present out for consultation which is due to end in mid December. We will be working closely with our three councils to implement any changes required.

#### 2.7 Costs:

This is the third “business as usual” Canvass since the introduction of IER. This type of canvass and the ongoing business as usual issue of HEF’s and ITR’s throughout the year is more expensive than the previous style of canvass. The UK Government has stated in the past that they will fund the extra expense of running this new version. Given the expensive nature of the canvass the UK Government set up pilot programs in England last year, with a further 2 being added in Scotland this year, to look at ways of reducing the ongoing costs of the annual canvass. Any permanent changes which may be suggested from these pilots will require legislative changes and securing parliamentary time for debating any such legislation, given the current pressures on parliamentary time, may prove problematic. I think it prudent therefore to continue to budget for the existing cost of the canvass and ensure we receive the “top up” funding from the UK Government as previously discussed.

### **3. The Next Year:**

#### 3.1 Elections:

There are no scheduled elections for next year at present. However, we need to be prepared should a snap election or by election be called at short notice.

### **General Conclusions**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their continuing hard work and effective management of the Annual Canvass.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The Board notes the contents of this report.

Kate A Crawford - 8th November 2017

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