



# Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

**Report to:** Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board  
**Meeting on:** 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
**Subject:** Electoral Update Report - Canvass 2020  
**Author:** Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

## 1. Introduction

This report has, of necessity, changed from that of previous years as the Canvass is now quite different to what we have known in the past. Where it has been possible, similar statistics have been used to attempt to show where the differences lie between the old and new style canvass.

## 2. Canvass Reform

- 2.1 The new canvass has been legislated for and across the UK Electoral Registration officers are working with this new version, we commenced the canvass in early August.
- 2.2 Following my report to the Board in September 2020, I can now advise that this new canvass has worked well and staff have managed to process enquiries and produce an updated register whilst working remotely. This is no small task and thanks goes to all those involved.
- 2.3 I took the decision not to carry out the final part of the canvass which is a personal visit to those properties that had not responded to 2 previous communications. Given the circumstances we found ourselves in regarding the level of restrictions for all three joint board councils I decided it would not be in the interests of either the canvassers or the electors to have a personal visit this year. Instead, those properties involved received a further communication from us inviting them to register. Before taking this final decision I took advice from Health & Safety officers and from my own staff and, restrictions permitting, we will run a mini canvass in the Spring of 2021 which would see us visiting “non responding” households in time for them to become registered for the forthcoming May 21 elections.
- 2.4 The final statistics show (Appendix 1) the number of Door to Door/ Personal visits we could have been carrying out this year had the circumstances allowed. As can be seen from Appendix 1 the number of properties requiring a personal visit has dropped significantly under this new style canvass, down to 54% compared to last year’s figures and, even better at 40% compared to 2018 statistics. It would appear that the canvass is delivering on reducing the number of properties requiring this final contact.
- 2.5 Lessons have been learned from this first year of the new canvass and we will conduct an internal review to note what we have learned and changes we will incorporate for next year’s canvass. In this way we are recording what worked well and planning for areas where we think we could improve.

### **3. Future Elections**

- 3.1 The next scheduled elections are for May 2021 Scottish Parliamentary. Given the uncertainty of the current pandemic and the effect it may have on both national and local ability to deliver a normal election, preparations are being made to address the various scenarios that we might find ourselves in. As a member of the Electoral Management Board (EMB) for Scotland and as Vice Chair of the Scottish Assessors Electoral Registration Committee I am involved with a number of stakeholders and fellow ERO's exploring ways to ensure a safe delivery of next May's elections.

There is legislation progressing through the Scottish parliament to move the "cut-off date" for application for a postal vote to approximately 2 weeks before the registration "cut-off date". The aim of this is to ensure that ERO's have the necessary time to process and implement these requests in a timely manner which ensures those electors wishing to vote this way are able to do so.

The Scottish Government is about to write out to all ERO's informing them of additional funding that is being made available to assist in the extra costs of preparing for an election which could see a surge in postal vote applications and emergency proxy applications. This funding will be "ring fenced" for the ERO to ensure they equip themselves to ensure delivery of the election. This funding for example can go towards the cost of employing temporary staff, IT hardware, scanners etc. Each ERO will be asked to submit their plan to Scottish Government showing the particular plans in place for their own requirements.

- 3.2 At the time of writing there are no other elections scheduled, however, as always this will be kept under review and should circumstances require, our staff will be able to deliver.

### **4. Publication of Registers**

- 4.1 Although there is the option to delay publication of the register this year to 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2021 I have decided to publish as normal on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December.

### **5. Ongoing Projects**

- 5.1 I am on both the Westminster and Scottish Government Accessibility Groups, these groups are still meeting virtually and it is beneficial to be a member of both to help understand and find solutions for electors with various needs to ensure we are as inclusive as possible when creating our registers and inviting electors to participate in electoral events.

I am also on various Cabinet Office working groups which consider various aspects of electoral registration such as Overseas Electors, making the online registration/applying for a postal vote process easier and contingencies for elections held under Covid restrictions.

### **General Conclusions**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for once again delivering the canvass through their hard work and professionalism and in continuing to deliver all electoral services during these unusual times.

## **Recommendations**

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

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9th November 2020

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## Appendix 1

<b>2018</b>	<b>Total Forms Issued</b>	<b>Final Door to Door</b>
East Renfrewshire	55,245	7,964
Inverclyde	56,525	10,587
Renfrewshire	125,798	23,927
Total	237,568	42,478

<b>2019</b>	<b>Total Forms Issued</b>	<b>Final Door to Door</b>
East Renfrewshire	56,423	10,647
Inverclyde	59,205	14,544
Renfrewshire	133,952	32,205
Total	249,580	57,396

<b>2020</b>	<b>Total Forms Issued</b>	<b>Final Door to Door</b>
East Renfrewshire	39,800	3604
Inverclyde	44,759	6103
Renfrewshire	96,121	13493
Total	180,680	23200