



Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Report to: Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board

Meeting on: 19th November 2021

Subject: Electoral Update Report

Author: Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

1. Introduction

This report is to inform board members of changes, updates or new legislation affecting Electoral Registration.

2. New Legislation

2.1 As previously reported, the UK Government has introduced an Elections Bill to the House of Commons. This is currently going through the Parliamentary process. The Bill seeks, amongst other items, to:-

- Require voters to show photo ID at polling stations before a ballot paper is issued.
- Require the Registration Officer to issue free voter identification documents to those without a valid form of photo ID.
- Require postal voters to reapply for a postal vote every three years, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years
- Further limit the number of electors any individual may act for as proxy
- Allow all British citizens living overseas to vote in UK Parliamentary elections regardless of when they left the UK
- Ban political campaigners from handling postal voting documents

2.2 The measures being introduced are largely for UK Parliamentary Elections only and may result in different administration arrangements and ID requirements applying to UK elections from those that apply in Scottish Parliamentary and Local government elections. There will also be differing requirements for electors in respect of refreshing/renewing absent vote arrangements for UK and Local Government registers.

2.3 The various requirements of the Bill, will if implemented, have significant budget and workload implications for EROs.

2.4 A number of Statutory Instruments have been laid in the Scottish Parliament relating to the Local Government Elections taking place in May 2022. The implications for Electoral Registration are mainly extending the availability of emergency proxies to those who suffer a disability before the application period for emergency proxies begins, but are unable to apply until during the application period for emergency proxies and changes to the address that an eligible prisoner can use for an absent vote application.

3. Canvass 2021

- 3.1 This is the second year of the reformed Canvass. As previously reported the main changes allow the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to decide on different routes for canvassing households. The route chosen for each household is based on whether the household matched when we sent a copy of our register to DWP for matching. If the household matched fully, they were allocated to a Route 1 canvass communication. If the household partly matched, we did further local data matching and if that satisfied the criteria then these properties were also added to Route 1. In effect route 1 households received a letter containing the names of people we have registered there and informing residents if all these details are correct, they need do no more. If, however, changes require to be made they are directed to the government online service for registration or they can contact our office.
- 3.2 If properties didn't match then we sent a Route 2 communication which asked the householders to fill in a form for eligible electors, along the lines of the Household Enquiry Form (HEF) that we issued for the last few years. This route does however require following up if there is a non-return of information.
- 3.3 This leaves the last group of properties which uses the Route 3 canvass option. These are our Establishments, such as Nursing Homes, Student residencies etc. and these properties are generally dealt with by a suitable "responsible person" who fills in the information for their particular establishment. Again, the properties on this route require to be sent reminders if there is a non-return of information.
- 3.4 Since the last report in September the door to door phase of the canvass has been taking place. This is for properties where we sent a Route 2 or 3 communication and no response either to the initial letter or a reminder was received. The Appendix details the number of properties that required a door visit.
- 3.5 This year the door to door canvass was undertaken by our own staff using newly purchased tablets that carry all the information electronically, this does away with the requirement of handling paper and the information is uploaded in real time to our Electoral Management System. This phase of the canvass is due to be completed on 22nd November
- 3.6 Publication of the Register will take place on 1st December 2021 as planned, however, monthly updates have continued to be published during the canvass period and these have been distributed to all interested parties.
- 3.7 A report on the outcome of the canvass and publication of the revised register will be presented to the next meeting.

4. Future Elections

- 4.1 A By-Election has been scheduled for Tuesday 14th December in Renfrewshire Ward 6, Paisley South East. Working in conjunction with the Returning Officer (RO), timetables for the supply of Electoral Register and Absent Voter information have been agreed and key staff attend and contribute to the ROs Election Project Board. The last date for new Electors within that Ward to apply to be on the Electoral Register for this By-Election is Thursday 25th November.

- 4.2 The next scheduled election is set for 5th May 2022, the Local Government Election. Preparations at a national level are well underway, in this particular election the count is done electronically, and the printing contract is with one supplier, so a little different from other elections. Planning at a local level, in conjunction with the Returning Officers, will ramp up after publication of the revised register and into the new year.
- 4.3 The Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB) have issued a number of directions to Returning Officers and EROs to ensure a consistency of approach across Scotland I will, of course, follow those directions. In addition the EMB and the Electoral Commission are holding a joint seminar for EROs and ROs regarding the planning and delivery of the election.

Recommendations

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

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9th November 2021

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Appendix 1

2021	Total Forms Issued	Door to Door
East Renfrewshire	37,792	3,766
Inverclyde	44,530	5,525
Renfrewshire	95,438	12,033
Total	177,760	21,324