



## **AGENDA ITEM 5**

### **CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD**

**Subject: INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION REPORT**  
**Meeting: CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD**  
**Date: 20 SEPTEMBER 2013**  
**Author: PETER WILDMAN, DEPUTE ASSESSOR**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This report is to update the Valuation Joint Board on the current progress towards the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration. The UK Parliament passed the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 in January 2013. This Act sets out the framework for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in Great Britain in 2014
- 1.2 The legislation provided for a Confirmation Dry Run to be carried out during the summer of 2013 to test the processes ahead of the introduction of IER in 2014. Secondary legislation which is currently with the UK Parliament for approval is proposing that IER is introduced in England and Wales on 01 July 2014 and in Scotland on 19 September 2014. IER is already in force in Northern Ireland.

#### **2. CONFIRMATION DRY RUN**

- 2.1 The aim of the Confirmation Dry Run was to test that the IT systems worked and to provide an estimate of the numbers of electors likely to match or fail in 2014 and the consequent number of forms to be issued in 2014. It is intended that if electors fully match against DWP records in 2014 then they will automatically be confirmed on the new IER Register. These electors will receive a letter confirming that they have been registered. Those who fail to match and cannot subsequently be matched against local databases will be invited to apply to register under IER. All empty properties and properties where the electors have been temporarily "carried forward" at the last canvass due to no satisfactory direct or indirect response will receive a "Household Enquiry Form" asking them to confirm who is resident at the property so that individual "Invitations to Register" may be sent out if appropriate. The

secondary legislation will require us to have visited every property where a form has not been returned after two reminders.

- 2.2 All the Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain had to send their Electoral Registers to the Government Digital Service for onward transmission to the Department of Work and Pensions for matching against their databases. Electors were marked according to the accuracy of the match. The data for Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling Councils was sent and matched during August. The results were good and better than anticipated
- 2.3 Connecting the Board's Electoral Management System to the Government's Digital Service involved meeting stringent Cabinet Office Terms of Use. This meant amongst other things improving the physical security of the building through increased protection for the Server Room, and by the introduction of a Door Entry System, and internal Electronic Door Locks. There have been several changes to office procedures comprising new Visitor Access Procedures, Security Incident Reporting Procedures and a soon to be implemented Clear Desk Policy. This has been done in consultation with all employees to find workable solutions. One outstanding item is enhanced checking as part of our recruitment processes, it is looking likely that we will have to extend the Board's Disclosure Policy to all staff and to check the last three years employment history of all new recruits. We are awaiting confirmation from the Cabinet Office of the level of Disclosure necessary. We will consult with staff and unions on this as soon as we have more detail. Any revised Recruitment Policy will be submitted for Board approval in due course
- 2.4 There have been costs associated with this work and the Cabinet Office have agreed to fund items such as the Penetration Test on our IT Systems, the formal Risk Assessment, and extra cabinets to facilitate the Clear Desk policy. We also received an initial funding allocation to cover staff time and expenses but the costs to the Board were higher than for many EROs as we were not connected to the GSX system. In this context we were in the same situation as Grampian, Lothian, and Tayside Valuation Joint Boards. We have therefore submitted an additional funding bid to the Cabinet Office to cover the shortfall. We will know if we have been successful by October 2013, if not it may be necessary to use some of the reserves set aside for IER work

### **3. FUTURE WORK**

- 3.1 The next stages are for us to analyse the results of the Confirmation Dry Run with a view to ascertain if we can increase the match rates even further by Local Data Matching against databases such as Council Tax and by looking at any property address issues that could be fixed. We will also use the results to develop a Public Engagement Strategy and finally to plan workload and resources for 2014/15. We will be advised of our funding allocation in October 2014 and we have until January 2015 to bid for extra funds if we believe that is necessary

- 3.2 To facilitate this work we have set up a small project team with me as Project Manager. The team comprises Russell Taylor, the Depute ERO, three members of the Electoral Team and two members of the IT Team. As the project moves forward we will be looking to work with communications staff at the three constituent councils to develop the public engagement strategy.
- 3.3 There will be an ongoing requirement to have a Penetration Test of our IT systems every year to ensure that our system is still compliant with the Terms of Use, this will not be funded by the Cabinet Office. We will also require an annual audit to ensure that we are following the security procedures that have been introduced. It has been agreed that Internal Audit at Clackmannanshire Council will carry out this work in the last quarter of this financial year. To facilitate the initial security audit the planned audit of Council Tax procedures will now take place in 2014/15
- 3.4 This is a busy period for the Electoral Team with a write out currently ongoing to postal voters whose signatures will be more than five years old by January 2015 asking for fresh signatures to be supplied. The annual canvass has been postponed this year to ensure the Register is as up to date as possible prior to the introduction of IER. It will now commence on 1 October 2013 with the new Register being published on 10 March 2014. The three Councils will be conducting statutory polling district reviews and any changes arising from these will need to be reflected in the Register of Electors. Next year will bring the European Elections on 22 May 2014, the Independence Referendum on 18 September 2014, swiftly followed by the introduction of IER the following day.
- 3.5 The Project Team's role is crucial as is the expert knowledge of senior managers and the Electoral Team to ensure that these events are delivered efficiently and professionally

#### **4.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Valuation Joint Board note the ongoing work to facilitate the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration**

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**Depute Assessor**  
**12 September 2013**