

# **CURRENT VOTER REGISTRATION PROCESS UPDATE 2016/17**

Electoral Registration           **17 October 2016**  
Process Review Working Party

Report Author                   **Claire Hawken, Electoral Service Manager**

Portfolio Holder               **Councillor Derek Crow-Brown, Cabinet Member for  
Corporate Governance**

Status                           **For Information/Recommendation**

Classification:               **Unrestricted**

Key Decision                   **No**

Reasons for Key               **N/A**

Previously Considered by   **None**

Ward:                           **Thanet Wide**

## **Executive Summary:**

This report will provide an update on current process for increasing voter awareness, registration and participation in the electoral process and an update on current voter registration statistics for the district by ward.

There is also an update on the annual canvass for 2016.

## **Recommendation(s):**

1. That the report and the proposed actions outlined be received and noted;
2. That Members of the Group come forward with any ideas of their own that would help promote voter awareness of registration via their work in the community.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial and Value for Money**

Responsibility for the canvass process rests with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), and accountability for performance and delivery of all electoral services is done through the Elections Commission, who monitors the performance standards of each ERO nationally

Funding from TDC for Electoral Registration totals £70,720.00.

Funding from the Cabinet Office for Individual Electoral Registration and Annual Canvass 2016 totals £27,812.67.

Currently Electoral Registration is within budget, and with the annual canvass underway will remain within budget.

	<p>Given the increased cost to local Councils caused by the transition from household to Individual registration, it is vital that the Government continues to ring fence funding and provides global funding rather than funding through bids initiatives, which then become very resource and process intensive with little qualitative benefit.</p> <p>Appropriate CSO/Financial Procedure Rules have been complied with in respect of all IER promotional work.</p>								
<b>Legal</b>	Responsibility for the canvass process rests with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), and accountability for performance and delivery of all electoral services is done through the Elections Commission, who monitors the performance standards of each ERO nationally								
<b>Corporate</b>	As part of responsibility for the canvass process, the Council prepares a Risk Register and a Business Continuity Plan and all canvass staff appointments take full account of Health and Safety legislation and any Human Rights Acts or discrimination/equal opportunity issues.								
<b>Equalities Act 2010 &amp; Public Sector Equality Duty</b>	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy &amp; maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage &amp; civil partnership.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> </table>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,		Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	✓	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	✓
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<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
A clean and welcoming Environment	
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	

<b>CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
Delivering value for money	✓
Supporting the Workforce	✓
Promoting open communications	✓

## 1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Electoral Registration Review Working party at its last meeting on 7 July 2016, asked for a report on arrangements and action taken to increase voter awareness and participation in the voting process.

## 2.0 The Current Voter Registration

- 2.1 The annual canvass now underway, with the whole area being covered by canvassers, so each property will have an initial Household Enquiry Form (HEF)

delivered by hand, at least one reminder, if no reply to initial form, will be delivered by hand and if there is still no reply two personal calls will be made to each property to encourage the completion of the HEF.

- 2.2 Cards will be used by canvassers at the personal call stage to leave at a property if there is no reply at the first call and a different one at the second call, again to encourage completion of the HEF.
- 2.3 Residents can respond to the HEF either online, by phone, by text message (if there are no changes) or by post (if there are changes).
- 2.4 The canvass has been planned to allow for further personal calls and forms to be sent if appropriate to do so, before the deadline to publish the updated register on 1 December 2016.
- 2.5 Work will be undertaken by the Election services team, to use other data sources available to use, such as Housing Benefits and Council Tax data, to check records and if our records match the information we can check we can use this to confirm the information is correct and there is no need to keep chasing residents for a reply.
- 2.6 We also use new occupier data from Council Tax to send HEF's to properties, where there have been changes in occupier. This has been ongoing since March, and this has seen a good response on those forms issued.
- 2.7 If we received information of new residents from a complete HEF we have to send out an Invitation to Register and Registration form (ITR). These will also be delivered by hand by our canvassers, and if no reply to initial form will be delivered by hand and if there is still no reply two personal calls will be made to each property to encourage the completion of the ITR. Residents can register on line using the Government Register to Vote website, in person, over the phone or by post.
- 2.8 We are now allowed to send ITR's by email (this was only made possible in time for this annual canvass), so we will be using this option and send encouragements emails if no response.

### **3.0 Improving Voter Registration**

- 3.1 Work is also being undertaken to improve our webpages, and that work is continuing, including comparing to other authorities information available.
- 3.2 It is worth a mention that the EU Referendum created a large surge of applications to register and I believe the register is probably the most complete and accurate it has ever been. All the while residents don't move then those electors only recently registered for the EU Referendum will remain on the register.
- 3.3 There are 3 pilot schemes for the annual canvass being undertaken by authorities elsewhere in the country and it is hoped that the results from those will inform change and improve the annual canvass in the future.
- 3.4 We also now have access to information on residents in this area who have taken the Citizenship ceremony and if they are not registered we send them the necessary forms to register.
- 3.5 We also have school data of those residents aged 16-18 still at school, who may need to be added to the register in readiness for turning 18. However a lot of work is required to verify this data is up to date, before we can put this to good use and add

someone's name to the register and then send them an ITR, as parents do not always advise KCC of their change of address.

3.6 We will be using Twitter and Facebook to encourage responses to both HEFs and ITRs.

3.7 Response rates will be monitored regularly and if there appears to be a problem in an area, we will use canvassers who have had a good response rates to do a visit stage of personal calls again, to see if the issue is with the area or the canvasser. Once that information has been gained, then plans can be made for future canvasses that may be more tailor-made to an individual area.

#### **4.0 Options**

4.1 Members are invited to comment on the updates;

4.2 Members to note the report.

#### **5.0 Next Steps**

5.1 If the working party comes up with viable suggestions for improving voter registration, these will be reviewed by the Electoral Registration Team and feedback provided to the Members of the working party on the way forward.

Contact Officer:	Claire Hawken, Electoral Services Manager, 01842 577021
Reporting to:	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer and Madeline Homer, CEx & Electoral Registration Officer

#### **Annex List**

Annex 1	Voter Registration Statistics as at 15 August 2016
Annex 2	Polling Districts
Annex 3	Canvass Form and Remote Registration Return Statistics

#### **Background Papers**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Details of where to access copy</b>
None	N/A

#### **Corporate Consultation**

<b>Equalities</b>	Claire Grant, Information Governance and Equalities officer
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