

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
<b>Report Title</b>	Update on IER	
<b>Key Decision</b>	n/a	Item No. 6
<b>Ward</b>	n/a	
<b>Contributors</b>	Malcolm Constable, Electoral Services Manager	
<b>Class</b>	Part 1	Date: 22 October 2014

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update members on the implementation of individual electoral registration (IER) in Lewisham.

## 2. Recommendation

That members note the report.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 IER fundamentally changes the way people are admitted to the electoral roll. Where under the old system one person in every household was responsible for registering everyone else at that address, under the new system each person is required to register individually. Members' attention is drawn to a briefing note which was prepared on the implications of IER by the Chief Executive in August 2014, which now appears at Appendix 1. A further briefing was prepared in response to a query from Cllr Mallory and this now appears at Appendix 2.
- 3.2 As the briefing note explains, there are transitional arrangements for IER. Many electors can be automatically transferred from the old electoral roll to the new. We can do this where the details we have on our electoral roll are a perfect match with those held on the database of the Department of Work and Pensions. (DWP).
- 3.3 Electors will be deleted from the electoral roll if:-
- They have not been automatically transferred under the arrangements set out in 3.2 above.
  - responded to the 2013/4 canvass or
  - subsequently responded to requests to register under the new IER system

Currently the legislation provides that this will not happen prior to 1 December 2016, but it may be brought forward to 1 December 2015.

- 3.4 IER went live in early June 2014, a matter of only 11 days after the combined European, Mayoral and local elections. With the support of the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office, the focus of all electoral services teams across London and further afield was up to that point mainly on those elections and not IER. It was felt that focussing on IER prior to the elections would distract efforts from a complicated combined election, and had real potential to confuse the voter into the run up to those elections.
- 3.5 In June 2014, Lewisham was one of the first boroughs to undergo the matching exercise with DWP. As a result approximately 156,000 electors were automatically transferred to the new electoral roll. Confirmation letters were sent to this effect to all of those electors.
- 3.6 In addition to those who matched perfectly with DWP data, there were another 46,000 people whose details did not match perfectly with DWP data. Although DWP does not tell us why this should be so, it may be, for example, because addresses are expressed slightly differently, or names abbreviated. Many of these people, were in the same household as a person automatically transferred, and many had been on our electoral roll for several years. We sent out forms (Invitations to Register – ITR) to each of the 46,000 individuals in this category. These people need to send us personal identifiers, ideally date of birth and National Insurance number to be registered.
- 3.7 Understandably many of these people did not understand why they were now being asked to register, and many did not send the required details to enable registration to take place. Where there is no response, reminders are sent. Where the response is incomplete, chasing letters are sent. The response to the ITR mail out has generated an unprecedented level of bureaucracy and an overwhelming telephone response from members of the public.
- 3.8 To complete the picture, it was also necessary to send out Household Enquiry Forms to approximately 21,000 households in respect of which we did not have sufficient detail to enable us to send out individual Invitations to Register. These were sent to households which were empty or where there had been no response to the 2013/4 canvass. They are also sent to households where there appears from our register to be no-one eligible to vote. By definition these households are the hard to reach, as the forms are only sent to non responders and addresses thought to be empty. Where there is no response, several chasers have to be sent.
- 3.9 The huge increase in paper handling required by the new system (approximately four times that involved in an old style canvass) has meant that Electoral Services have had to recruit temporary staff to cope with demand who will remain engaged until the extreme pressure of the transitional period subsides.
- 3.10 The pressure of work in the transitional period has been exacerbated, not only in Lewisham but across London and elsewhere, by the fact that the

implementation of IER so soon after the European elections meant that the external providers of electoral registration and management systems had little time to prepare properly for going live, with some aspects of their systems not yet capable of the necessary functionality. For example, it is not possible to export data to our external printing contractors (though this was expected to be available) to enable our correspondence to electors to be printed, folded, inserted into envelopes and sent out by our contractors. Instead this has had to be carried out in house. Urgent representations to the Cabinet Office have resulted in additional funds for specialist printing machinery (capable of printing and scanning A3 size forms) becoming available very recently, which we have reluctantly accepted as it does not provide an optimal solution. Our electoral management system providers are working hard to resolve the technical issues and are much better placed than others according to feedback from other London Boroughs, but solutions to these matters are still awaited.

#### **4. Canvass – Autumn 2014**

##### *Household Enquiry Form (HEF) Canvass*

- 4.1 Where letters and reminders to the HEF process have not produced results, we must now canvass those properties. Because of the transitional issues set out above, this began 4 weeks later than anticipated in August 2014. Because they have only been sent to non-returning households and void properties, they are a difficult target for our canvassers. Though over 20,300 Household Enquiry Forms were sent out, there was only a 9% response rate. Though we sent reminders to 18,400 households, there was only a 4% response rate. This means that over 17,500 properties have to be canvassed now.
- 4.2 We have recruited and trained 64 canvassers to cover our canvass areas. These are aligned to the polling districts.
- 4.3 In future, A full HEF canvass will take place each year, but the first of these will not take place until Autumn 2015, after the UK Parliamentary Election.

##### *Invitation to Register (ITR) Canvass*

- 4.4 This will begin on completion of the HEF canvass on 27<sup>th</sup> October and will conclude with publication of a new revised register on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014.
- 4.5 Our planning for the ITR canvass has been hampered by the lack of statistical reports in our electoral management system. Whilst statistics relating to HEF returns are readily available there are no such comparable figures in the system for ITR forms. More frustratingly the system does not as yet provide up to date figures of where our electorate stands to date in relation to IER registration overall. It does not yet provide summary totals of how many of our electorate are registered under the new system, how many of our electors who were not a perfect match with DWP data are now matched, and ahead of the next Parliamentary Election how many of our postal voters are now

matched. We anticipate that this will be resolved by our external suppliers shortly, but in the meantime do not have the data to report to Committee.

## **5. Post Autumn Canvass 2014**

5.1 IER has put in place processes for both HEFs and ITRs. Non responders to HEFs and ITRs will get three reminders and one personal call. These can be conducted in any order. Initially two reminders will be sent, followed by a canvasser's call, with a third reminder being sent as the final notice. Canvassing will continue after the publication of the register on December 1 as there is a legal requirement to call at least once on non-responders to HEFs and ITRs.

5.2 We have identified the need to have a pool of experienced canvassers, with appropriate payment mechanisms to ensure that the new continuing canvass requirements can be met. In addition, a number of electoral management system providers are developing tablet devices specifically to streamline the canvass process. We hope in the very near future to purchase sufficient tablet devices to give to this pool of canvassers in order to

- reduce the amount of paperwork and improve efficiency
- improve confidentiality aspects relating to doorstep canvassing
- track the activity of canvassers

5.3 A recent report from the Electoral Commission into engagement strategies in a number of pilot authorities (see Appendix 2) demonstrated that the most effective way to engage people in the IER process is to use intensive canvassing methods. The report suggested a number of ways in which local authorities might use best practice to maximize individual electoral registration. These are repeated at Appendix 2 with Lewisham's response to those recommendations.

5.4 We are currently exploring the possibility of a borough wide mail out in February 2015 to advise households of their registration details and asking whether the registration is accurate or needs amendment, so that we can capture details ahead of the surge that issue of poll cards will bring in April next year.

## **6. Funding**

Funding appears adequate to date, even allowing for the additional printing requirements. However we will not have a clear picture of its continued adequacy until such time as we can measure what the business as usual activity is.

## **7. Engagement Strategy**

7.1 There is a detailed resume of our engagement activities and plans in both appendix 1 and 2. Since then we have attended the Fresher's Fair at Goldsmiths which has resulted in 216 names and address of students being

obtained who have either asked for forms or promised to go on line to register. We are currently following all these up. The purchase of the tablet devices will help with this type of activity in future.

- 7.2 We are also using the Young Mayor event on 15/16 October to encourage young attainers to register under IER.
- 7.3 The Elections team have had a number of conversations with people suffering from a range of disabilities who find the new system challenging. This reinforces the view that we have to work closely with disability forums to assist with registration and Adult Social Services.
- 7.4 There is a particular issue for elderly people and especially those resident in care homes. Many do not have access to or cannot remember their personal identifiers. In the case of care homes, the managers do not necessarily have all their residents' details to hand and in a number of cases the residents cannot remember them. The principal issue is that the initial requirement of an individual seeking to register under IER is to supply a National Insurance Number and date of birth which has to match with the DWP. In the absence of this data applicants then have to fill out an ITR form without those details which, on receipt, automatically defaults to a request for further evidence. In the absence of further evidence they would then have to provide an attestation from someone of "good standing" on the electoral roll in the area. Attestors may only attest 2 electors in a twelve month period so care home managers will not be able to fulfil this role for all of their residents and alternatives will have to be found.
- 7.5 The issue is not immediate as most electors on the register will remain on it until after the UK Parliamentary election. Only those non responders to last year's canvass and this Autumn's limited HEF canvass will be deleted. However many residents of care homes are postal voters and if they remain unregistered for IER purposes their postal votes will be cancelled. This means we will need to redouble our efforts to ensure that those postal voters are not disenfranchised

## **8. Financial implications**

See section 6 above

## **9. Legal implications**

These are mainly set out in the body of the report and its appendices

- 9.1 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.2 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

9.3 The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

9.4 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:  
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/>

9.5 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

1. The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
2. Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
3. Engagement and the equality duty
4. Equality objectives and the equality duty
5. Equality information and the equality duty

9.6 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:  
<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

**10. Crime and disorder implications**

The Government introduced IER with the expressed intention of combating electoral registration fraud.

**11. Equalities implications**

To fulfil its duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Council's engagement strategy is designed to encourage registration by those with protected characteristics and hard to reach groups.

**12. Environmental implications**

There are no environmental implications arising.

**Background documents and originator**

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### **Individual Electoral Registration (IER)**

#### 1 Introduction

A fundamental change to electoral registration is taking place.

Under the old system, one person in every household was responsible for registering everyone else who lives at that address. Now each person is required to register to vote individually.

Under Individual Electoral Registration electors will need to provide their date of birth and national insurance number, when applying to register.

#### 2 Transitional arrangements

We can transfer many electors from the old electoral roll onto the new roll. We can do this where the details we have on electors match the details held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on those individuals.

Electors will be deleted from our electoral roll if they have not:

- been transferred automatically in a matching of the electoral roll with DWP data
- responded to the 2013/14 canvass
- subsequently responded to requests to register under the new IER system.

#### 3 Data transfer - live run

Lewisham Council was one of the first to transfer its electoral roll data to DWP for matching. Some councils have yet to do this. The results were marked as red (no match) amber (weak match) and green (match). Our results were 69% green; 5% amber and 27% red.

The DWP does not tell us why a person has not matched. It may occur, for example, because a person's name or address is expressed slightly differently on the DWP and electoral roll. Because of this, it is possible that some members of the same household will be automatically included on the new electoral roll and others may not. A red result is likely to mean there is no match at all, probably because the person has moved. A high number of reds for this reason is to be expected in a borough like Lewisham with a large transitory population.

On a second match conducted by Electoral Services using local data, the percentage of green matches in Lewisham reached 77%.

#### 4 July activity

*Confirmatory letters* – We wrote to everyone automatically transferred onto the new register (approx 152,000) to confirm that.

*Invitation to Register (ITR)* – We invited all the people on our electoral register whose data did not match the DWP data (approx 46,000) to register on the new electoral roll under the new rules. These people must provide a date of birth and National Insurance number to register. If they do not respond we will send reminders and then knock on doors.

*Household Enquiry Forms (HEF)* – Where electors did not respond to the last canvass, or where properties are shown as empty on our database, we sent an enquiry form to those households asking for details of who lives there (approx 21,000). Once we have that information we send an invitation to register to the individuals concerned. If there is no response to the enquiry form, we will send reminders and then knock on doors.

Electoral Services are now processing the responses to the ITR and HEF forms. There are many thousands and additional temporary staff have been recruited to handle what is a much more heavily paper based and bureaucratic system to administer.

## 5 Canvass

We will employ canvassers to door knock from the beginning of September until 24 November 2015 prior to publication of the new register on 1 December 2015.

## 6 General election and absent voters

Those not registered under transitional provisions or the new regime will not fall off the register before the General Election and so will be able to vote provided they can do so in person. Unmatched absent voters will not be able to vote by post or proxy. They must either be matched or registered under the new system to do so. They will however be able to vote at the polling stations.

## 7 Removal from the register

After the transitional period, those who have not been automatically transferred nor registered under the new system will be removed from the electoral register. The law states that this will be in November 2016, though it is expected that this may be brought forward to 2015.

## 8. Annual canvass

Once the transitional arrangements are complete, in future years we will conduct an annual canvass by sending out household enquiry forms to all households, and where there is a change, sending invitations to register under the new system.

## 9. Maximising registration

There is a real risk that numbers on the electoral roll will fall because of this new process and so we have put in place a plan to encourage registration, particularly where registration rates are low. Table 1 shows the match results as returned by the DWP by ward, and Table 2 shows the match rates after local matching. Many of the wards with low match rates have a high student population and 5 of them are in the Lewisham Deptford constituency.

## 10. Timing

Prior to 22<sup>nd</sup> May this year, the energies of Electoral Services, both locally and across London were understandably focussed on the European, Mayoral and local elections. This was an approach encouraged by the Electoral Commission so as not to confuse electors prior to the election. Very shortly after that, on 13<sup>th</sup> June, Lewisham was among the very first to be called on to transfer its electoral data to DWP. As results came back from DWP, Electoral Services have been heavily engaged in local matching, and in mid July sent out approximately 67,000 household enquiry forms and invitations to register to those not automatically transferred to the new register. Where enquiry forms are returned, we are

sending out individual invitations to register. To date there have been thousands of responses which we are currently processing. We are required by the Cabinet Office by 1<sup>st</sup> September to have processed all the responses and sent out all confirmatory letters where appropriate.

#### 11. Engagement activities to date

Efforts to engage locally complement those being taken or to be taken nationally and we are focussing our efforts to dovetail with wider Electoral Commission initiatives. We have been given £27,000 by the Cabinet Office to conduct engagement initiatives for IER. Because of the timing issues set out above, our engagement strategy, though under way, will gain more momentum after the 1<sup>st</sup> September as until then, the main emphasis in Electoral Services has to be on the significant and previously unseen operational demands of implementation. Even so, to date we have carried out or arranged the following activities with a view to maximising registration:-

a) analysed matching data by ward to identify areas of low registration and profiled issues on a ward basis.

b) carried out local matching with Council Tax records and are currently pursuing more matching with tenancy and benefit files where possible.

c) attended (and continuing to attend) citizenship ceremonies regularly to encourage registration at that point.

d) attended a stall at Lewisham People's Day in July 2014 with information on IER and how to register, with leaflets, posters, badges and mugs with contact numbers freely available to the public. We took names and addresses of those without access to the internet and followed up.

e) produced an article in August Lewisham Life about IER and how to register, with one to be included in each of the next 3 editions of Lewisham Life.

f) promoted IER by inclusion of information about it in the "Welcome to Lewisham" pack which is sent to every new resident.

g) provided a promotional button on the Council's website containing information about IER and links to relevant sites.

h) We have joined a partnership with 25 other London boroughs to run an advertising campaign for IER – each borough contributing approximately £3000. This will include posters at key transport interchanges and on buses. This joint initiative will also have adverts in the Metro and Evening Standard. The first phase coincides with the first phase of IER from 4<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> August. The second will happen as the canvassers are going out to knock on doors, in early to mid September.

i) Posters are being distributed to libraries, community centres and other information sites in August.

j) We have promoted IER on the Lewisham email news letters to which there are currently approximately 22,000 subscribers, with take up increasing by about 800 per month

k) Electoral Services currently receive a list from Council Tax every month of people who have recently registered for Council Tax. We follow up by sending information and

registration forms to the newly registered Council Tax payer. From Autumn, this will be modified to reflect the new registration system.

We recognise that the wards with the lowest match rates have high concentrations of student population, who frequently move both within, and in and out, of the borough. So we have also put in place a number of initiatives targeted at the student population. These include:-

l) meeting with the Registrars at both Goldsmiths and Lewisham College to arrange for Electoral Services attendance at their Freshers Fairs with information about and to promote registration at the beginning of the academic year in September/October.

m) agreed to attend a registration event at Goldsmiths in the Autumn focussing on the students' general interaction with the Council. At this event it is anticipated that there will be an incentive for students to attend as it will also give practical advice on claiming Council Tax discount and exemption.

n) the link to the Register to Vote website is to be produced at the end of student enrolment documents at Lewisham College and Goldsmiths, and a leaflet explaining IER is to be included in student registration packs.

o) We will be attending secondary schools in the Autumn term to encourage registration by those aged 16 year and over.

p)At the Young Mayor election in October, we generally hand out oyster card holders which feature a design on the front promoting registration generally. This year the design will focus on IER with contact details and website address. Information on IER will be available for young people as they attend to vote.

q) The Young Mayor manifesto will carry details of IER and urge those reading it to register under the new system with relevant advice on how to do so, including website addresses.

r) It is current practice to send a birthday card to people on the register reaching the age of 18 years informing them of their right to vote. We intend to modify the message for those not automatically transferred onto the new register urging them to register under the new system or lose their newly acquired right to vote. We will provide information on how to register under the new system including relevant web addresses.

## 12 Future engagement activity

The initiatives listed above are only the start of our attempts to maximise registration. We realise that we will need to make determined efforts to minimise the risk of people disappearing from the electoral register. In the very near future, we intend to implement a range of further activities to include:-

- Liaise with Lewisham Homes, Phoenix and other housing associations operating in the borough to ask them to include IER promotional material in their new tenancy packs.
- Visit care homes in the borough to encourage residents to register under the new system.

- Approach voluntary and community organisations in the borough to seek their help in getting the message across to hard to reach groups, particularly those with English as a second language.
- Ask the Young Mayor and advisors for their ideas about the best way to reach young people and encourage them to register under the new system, recruiting their assistance and using social media where possible.

13 Further information

Available from Malcolm Constable ext 46907 or Kath Nicholson ext 47648

August 2014

**Table 1 - DLR results for LBL Wards & Parliamentary Constituencies**

Ward/Constituency	Electorate	Red Electors	Red %	Amber Electors	Amber %	Green Electors	Green %
Downham	10301	1974	19.16	184	1.79	8143	79.05
Whitefoot	10027	2053	20.47	221	2.20	7753	77.32
Grove Park	10729	2270	21.16	238	2.22	8221	76.62
Bellingham	10314	2178	21.12	234	2.27	7902	76.61
Catford South	10992	2458	22.36	468	4.26	8066	73.38
Lee Green	10543	2428	23.03	474	4.50	7641	72.47
Sydenham	11418	2673	23.41	548	4.80	8197	71.79
Crofton Park	10827	2670	24.66	549	5.07	7608	70.27
Perry Vale	11245	2845	25.30	540	4.80	7860	69.90
Forest Hill	10702	2726	25.47	503	4.70	7473	69.83
Ladywell	10008	2560	25.58	525	5.25	6923	69.17
Rushey Green	9866	2771	28.09	682	6.91	6413	65.00
Blackheath	10363	3086	29.78	579	5.59	6698	64.63
Evelyn	11420	3581	31.36	468	4.10	7371	64.54
Telegraph Hill	11468	3321	28.96	803	7.00	7344	64.04
New Cross	11414	3924	34.38	467	4.09	7023	61.53
Lewisham Central	13256	4430	33.42	877	6.62	7949	59.97
Brockley	12614	4589	36.38	860	6.82	7165	56.80
Lewisham Deptford	81007	25075	30.95	4549	5.62	51383	63.43
Lewisham East	72821	17040	23.40	2846	3.91	52935	72.69
Lewisham West & Penge	43679	10422	23.86	1825	4.18	31432	71.96
<b>All Wards</b>	<b>197507</b>	<b>52537</b>	<b>26.60</b>	<b>9220</b>	<b>4.67</b>	<b>135750</b>	<b>68.73</b>

**Table 2 - Match results for LBL wards & Parliamentary Constituencies following LDM**

Ward/Constituency	Electorate	Confirmation Live Run		Local Data Matching		
		Green Electors	Green %	Green Electors	Green %	Change
Downham	10301	8143	79.05	8663	84.10	520
Whitefoot	10027	7753	77.32	8179	81.57	426
Grove Park	10729	8221	76.62	8874	82.71	653
Bellingham	10314	7902	76.61	8487	82.29	585
Catford South	10992	8066	73.38	8672	78.89	606
Lee Green	10543	7641	72.47	8464	80.28	823
Sydenham	11418	8197	71.79	9036	79.14	839
Crofton Park	10827	7608	70.27	8477	78.30	869
Perry Vale	11245	7860	69.90	8846	78.67	986
Forest Hill	10702	7473	69.83	8397	78.46	924
Ladywell	10008	6923	69.17	7690	76.84	767
Rushey Green	9866	6413	65.00	7118	72.15	705
Blackheath	10363	6698	64.63	7842	75.67	1144
Evelyn	11420	7371	64.54	8374	73.33	1003
Telegraph Hill	11468	7344	64.04	8276	72.17	932
New Cross	11414	7023	61.53	8016	70.23	993
Lewisham Central	13256	7949	59.97	9520	71.82	1571
Brockley	12614	7165	56.80	8712	69.07	1547
Lewisham Deptford	81007	51383	63.43	59065	72.91	7682
Lewisham East	72821	52935	72.69	57812	79.39	4877
Lewisham West & Penge	43679	31432	71.96	34766	79.59	3334
<b>All Wards</b>	<b>197507</b>	<b>135750</b>	<b>68.73</b>	<b>151643</b>	<b>76.78</b>	<b>15893</b>

## **IER Engagement Strategy**

The briefing note prepared by the Chief Executive and Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and distributed to all members in early August gives the background to Individual Elector Registration (IER), some of the challenges that IER represents and a synopsis of the engagement activity undertaken to date and planned for the future. A copy is attached at Appendix 1.

Transitional arrangements for IER provide for the automatic transfer to the new electoral roll of people whose details on our current electoral roll match those held by DWP. Those whose details do not match must register under IER, with NI number and date of birth, but the DWP does not tell us why an elector does not match. Consequently we cannot tell the elector when we write to them.

Electoral Services were required to carry out a dry run of this matching exercise in July 2013. We prepared an engagement strategy spread sheet for review by the Cabinet Office and the Electoral Commission based on the results of that dry run. This was designed to give us an indication of the sort of match rates we could expect, and the problem areas likely to arise in the live matching exercise which took place on 13 June 2014. This has now been updated to include the live run results and is attached at Appendix 2. The results of the live run almost exactly matched the dry run results.

### **IER - the LBL current position**

As encouraged by the Electoral Commission, the resources of both Electoral Services and their providers were understandably taken up with the local and European elections until the end of May. Attention turned in earnest to IER immediately after the elections. IER went live two weeks later on 10<sup>th</sup> June.

LBL was one of the first boroughs, on 13<sup>th</sup> June, to be called on to submit its data to DWP for matching and as a result was one of the first boroughs to undertake the process of sending out:-

- approximately 152,000 confirmation letters to those whose details matched DWP data and so were automatically transferred on to the new register; and
- over 46,000 invitations to register to those whose details did not match; and
- 21,000 household enquiry forms to households where there was no response in the last canvass or the property is shown as empty on our records. Where responses are received, individual invitations to register are sent out.

The bureaucratic task of handling these processes is unprecedented in Electoral Services. We have recruited temporary staff to assist with the workload which has dramatically increased but we are still heavily engaged in processing responses to the above mail outs and handling numerous queries from the electorate arising out of them.

Notwithstanding some initial teething difficulties, which could only be expected given the short lead in time between election and go live for IER, we are now making good progress with the transitional arrangements. Our focus has thus far been to ensure that we maximise the registration of our current electorate under IER. We are now sending out reminders to electors who did not respond to the household enquiry forms and invitations to register. We will start to knock on the doors of non-responders in October in readiness for publication of the register on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## **Engagement strategy**

The engagement analysis at Appendix 2 was developed using the most recent census results and the resulting updated ward profiles.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June, the DWP confirmed that 68% of those on our electoral roll matched DWP data. After matching with local records, this rose to 76%.

The engagement analysis confirmed what we knew from earlier canvass results:-

- LBL is on the fringe of Inner London with the north of the Borough being more densely populated than the south characteristically moving from inner city area profiles in the North to more suburban profiles in the South
- There is a higher proportion of older people in the South of the borough than the North.
- The number of households is increasing rapidly in three wards Lewisham Central, Brockley and Lee Green although the average household size has remained relatively constant between 2.2 and 2.4
- There are four wards to the north and centre of the Borough that have a high proportion of students, mainly as a result of proximity to Goldsmiths College. They are Brockley, New Cross and Telegraph Hill
- Of the 2500 communal establishments in the borough, 650 are in Brockley and 500 are in New Cross - these are mainly student accommodation
- The highest proportion of sole occupancy properties is in the north of the borough accounted for by young professionals and single parent families
- There are two wards that cause us particular concern which have all the characteristics of deprived inner city areas; they are Evelyn and New Cross
- Bellingham and Whitefoot have a higher than average proportion of young people
- There are 130 languages spoken in the borough. We have identified the top 10 and try to incorporate them in our registration promotions
- Downham has a fairly static population but with higher than average proportion of +65 year olds

With regard to the student populations in the four wards where they are particularly represented, we have developed good working relationships with the accommodation and registration officers at the College and University and will be entering data sharing agreements to enable us to send household enquiry forms to all their student accommodation addresses. They have also agreed to incorporate the government's on line registration address in their Fresher's welcome packs. We are also staging registration events at Fresher's weeks. Members are referred to Appendix 1 for a more detailed statement of activities to date.

The Cabinet Office has very recently released a report titled "Maximising Electoral Registration: An evaluation of local activities" which evaluated the maximising registration activities in 24 authorities who were allocated funding for these activities on a competitive basis.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/351448/Maximising\\_electoral\\_registration\\_full\\_report\\_sept\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351448/Maximising_electoral_registration_full_report_sept_2014.pdf)

A summary of their recommendations appears at Appendix 3. The Cabinet Office identified four under registered groups:-

- attainers (16-17 year olds),
- young people (18-24 year olds),
- people in social housing and
- people renting private accommodation.

Cabinet Office recommendations include intensive canvassing – not just in the canvass period when household enquiry forms are sent out to all households, - targeted tailored campaigns and working with other LBL departments and partners to encourage registration. We are adopting all of these recommendations within the scope of the funding for maximising registration, (i.e. £27,000) as the appendices demonstrate.