

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	Update on IER	
Key Decision	n/a	Item No. 4
Ward	n/a	
Contributors	Malcolm Constable, Electoral Services Manager	
Class	Part 1	Date: 19 March 2015

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a further update on IER for both the Elections Committee and the IER Registration Working Party.

2. Recommendation

That members note and make any comments they may have on the report.

3. Background

3.1 At the last Elections Committee, 15 January 2015, the IER update report was deferred for review by the IER Registration Working Party. The minutes of that meeting amongst other things required a report on under-registration across the UK be provided at the next meeting of the Working Party.

3.2 A report to the working party has been prepared and is attached as Appendix A. It draws largely on a report published by the Electoral Commission entitled:

“Analysis of the December 2014 electoral registers in England and Wales - The implementation of Individual Electoral Registration: progress report”

The full report can be found at

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-registration/monitoring-the-change-to-individual-electoral-registration>

3.3 The report highlights that there were 920,000 fewer entries on the register as at 1 December 2014 compared to the register following the publication at the close of the February 2014 late canvass. The variation at national local level; ranged from

- 12% to +7%. Lewisham's register declined by 3.4% whilst figures collected by London Authorities showed a fall of 150,132 in London's register from 5,888,773 to 5,738,641 a fall of 25%. The range across London was between +1.86% to - 8.39%.

The decline in the registers is blamed on the lack of a comprehensive canvass in the autumn of 2014 which meant that home movers have not been captured as effectively as in the past. The Commission hope that this will be remedied to some extent by Electoral Registration Officers sending Household Notification Letters HNL - see 4.2 below) to all households showing who is registered to vote at a particular address and hopefully prompting anyone not registered to do so.

The report is heavily caveated as the Electoral Commission have been critical of Electoral Management Software providers for failure to ensure that Local Authorities were able to provide accurate data. The Commission say this had "a significant impact on our ability to report on progress with implementing the transition to date". They are also very concerned that they will not have sufficient information to be able to "make robust, evidence - based assessment and recommendation in June 2015 to inform the UK Government's decision on whether to make an Order that the end of the transition to IER should be brought forward to December 2015".

Our experience with our own EMS providers mirrors this concern.

4 The transition to IER so far

- 4.1 The report submitted on IER in January 2015 indicated that our unconfirmed (Non IER registered electors) stood at just over 24,500 with our electorate standing at 189,000. The table attached as Appendix B shows that our unconfirmed electorate has fallen to approximately 19,500 and our register has increased by over 2000. These numbers mask the fact that we had to delete some 4000 electors who did not match with the DWP data base where either correspondence was returned as "returned to sender" or we had been advised by one means or another that the electors in question were no longer resident. We now have to have two independent pieces of information to delete such electors.

National Voter Registration Day (5 February) and the activities around that day had some impact. We received 1200 downloads from the IER on line service on Friday 6 February. Our normal daily average is 300. Of the first 1800 downloads, 600 were from people already registered under IER (duplicates). Our normal duplication rate is 10% daily. Not all the downloads will be matched electors so they will not go on the register until they provide further evidence.

- 4.2 The HNL was sent out on the 23 February 2005 to all 122,000 properties on the registration data base. We gave electors the opportunity to
- Go on line to register at the Governments website – www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

- Make additional changes to their details such as request postal votes by going to an Electoral Reform services secure website at www.registerbyinternet.co.uk/lewisham
- Return an amended form in the envelope provided or return it by e-mail to Electoral services

It is too early to fully predict the results except to say that the response reflects the high degree of degree of “churn” in our electorate. The HNL is not a statutory requirement so where there are no changes to report, no responses are required. We are receiving between 800 and 900 downloads from the Government’s on line service per day. Of these however between 200 and 250 are duplications from electors who are already IER registered.

5 Actions to maximise Registration

- 5.1 All activities detailed in of the previous report continue as is briefly summarised in Appendix A with specific emphasis on the UK Parliamentary General Election(UKPGE).- See Appendix C, the latest version of the Outreach and Publicity Action Plan and the specific Communications plan drawn up for the UKPGE for more detail.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 We have now been notified of the Government’s funding arrangements for the continuing transition period - April 2015 to March 2016 – of approximately £117,000. We have also received a further Maximising Registration Grant of £48,000 in respect of the HNL ,the anticipated final cost of which is likely to be £60,000.

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 The contents of this report reflect current legislation relating to electoral registration.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.

- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 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/>
- 7.6 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
- 7.7 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/>

8 Crime and disorder implications

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

9 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.

10 Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications arising.

Background documents

Report to Elections Committee 15 January 2015

If you have any queries about this report please contact Kath Nicholson, Head of Law at Laurence House, SE6 4RU on 0208 314 7648 or Malcolm Constable, Electoral Services Manager on 0208 314 6907

Appendix B

Constituency	Ward	Feb-14	Dec-14	Dec-14	Dec-14	Feb-15	Feb-15		% Improvement In IER Registered electorate Dec 14 to Feb15
		Electorate	Electorate	Unconfirmed		Electorate	Unconfirmed		
Deptford	Brockley	12489	11876	2123	17.88%	11876	1359	11.44%	6.43%
	Crofton Park	10767	10353	1192	11.51%	10521	964	9.16%	2.35%
	Evelyn	11378	10811	1833	16.95%	10959	1531	13.97%	2.98%
	Ladywell	9901	9605	1183	12.32%	9756	938	9.61%	2.70%
	Lewisham Central	13099	12608	1965	15.59%	12784	1504	11.76%	3.82%
	New Cross	11339	10821	2033	18.79%	10900	1508	13.83%	4.95%
	Telegraph Hill	11335	10868	1652	15.20%	11077	1302	11.75%	3.45%
East	Blackheath	10330	9863	1140	11.56%	9969	908	9.11%	2.45%
	Catford South	10950	10481	1223	11.67%	10579	1050	9.93%	1.74%
	Downham	10296	10101	945	9.36%	10225	778	7.61%	1.75%
	Grove Park	10728	10308	1033	10.02%	10399	871	8.38%	1.65%
	Lee Green	10513	10164	945	9.30%	10216	772	7.56%	1.74%
	Rushey Green	9785	9369	1423	15.19%	9526	1117	11.73%	3.46%
	Whitefoot	9983	9669	1073	11.10%	9753	900	9.23%	1.87%
West & Penge	Bellingham	10287	10014	1056	10.55%	10108	923	9.13%	1.41%
	Forest Hill	10714	10352	1277	12.34%	10481	1175	11.21%	1.13%
	Perry Vale	11172	10882	1232	11.32%	11038	990	8.97%	2.35%
	Sydenham	11365	10856	1205	11.10%	10983	981	8.93%	2.17%
	Totals	196431	189001	24533	12.98%	191150	19571	10.24%	2.74%
Deptford		80308	76942	11981	15.57%	77873	9106	11.69%	3.88%
East		72585	69955	7782	11.12%	70667	6396	9.05%	2.07%
West & Penge		43538	42104	4770	11.33%	42610	4069	9.55%	1.78%
Totals		196431	189001	24533	12.98%	191150	19571	10.24%	2.74%

Activity	Actioned/ to be actioned by	When	Audience
General Publicity for IER			
Electoral commission campaign July: 2014 T.V Advertising, on late at night on channels aimed at young people. Press releases x2 on website Posted posters and leaflets to libraries and youth centres.	Electoral commission Done HP/ AW Done HP/ AW/ GJ Library Lucy Formolli	July 2014	All. T.V. Adverts aimed at young people
Council web pages and publications Item on staff newsletter July/ Aug 2014 Item on staff intranet July/ Aug 2014 Button on Lewisham website homepage to IER information Information on website Continue reminders on Twitter and Facebook, newsletters Make it easier to find the information about IER on internet menu	Done HP/AW/GJ Done HP/AW/GJ Done HP/ AW. AW to add button to home page of website which links to IER info page again at regular intervals. Done HP AW to add reminder to register on more regular basis to Twitter, Facebook and email newsletters HP to work with AW and HH	July/ Aug 2014 Ongoing Ongoing	All staff All Staff All web users All web users All web users All web users Election page added to website links to registration pages.
People's day Gave out IER leaflets, mugs Took names and addresses of people who didn't have internet posted form out Also gave out information about Young Mayor election for those that were too young to vote in adult elections in conjunction with the Young Mayor team.	HP /Dami Benbow/ Anthony Hays. HP/DB/AH/ KB/MB	July 2014	All/ young people All/ young people
Comms to add follow up registration questions to competitions. The questions will be sent to competition entrants to remind them to register to vote.	AW sent 330 emails sent in response to the competitions. 50 people visited registering to vote website as a result.	Done AW/HP	All
Lewisham life articles August and November, next article prior to the parliamentary election	HP supplied copy to AW/ Comms HP to submit copy to AW prior to parliamentary election.	16 January 2014. Done to be printed 20 Feb	All

* Indicate data matching opportunities

Appendix D

Combined Elections 7 May 2015 WORK PROGRAMME

ACTIVITY/TASK

BY WHOM

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

Lead HP with Comms team/ AW

	Activities	Target audience	By Whom	Start	Finnish	Notes
1	Meeting with comms team to prepare Communications strategy and plan	N/A	MC/HP/AW	2014 December	Done	Several meetings in December re IER outreach plan. Election specific Comms meeting took place on 4/2/2015.
2	Webpage: UKPGE	All	HP/ HH	2014 December	Published January/ Feb 2015 Done.	Pages reviewed in December to be published in February following publication of electoral commission UKPGE timetable.
	Button: Elections 2014	All	HP/HH/ AW	2014 December	01/02/2015 Done	Link from home page to UKPGE landing page (once published).
	UKPGE election page	All	HP/HH	2014 December	On going	To be published by end of Feb 2015.
	Election description	All	HP	2014 December	Done Feb 2015	To be published by end of Feb 2015.
	Timetable and linked documents	All	HP	2014 December	On going Done Feb 2015	To be published by end of Feb 2015.
	Deadlines for registering and absent voting	All	HP	2014 December	Done Feb 2015	To be published by end of Feb 2015.
	Agents and Candidates	All	HP	2014 December	Done Feb 2015	To be published by end of Feb 2015.

	Information about nominations: where to obtain nomination packs, Local Returning Officer	All	HP	2014 December	Done Feb 2015	To be published by end of Feb 2015.
	Results	All	AW/ Electoral Services	08/05/2015	08/05/2015	After count on 8 May, estimate 4am.
2	Webpage: Archiving	All	HP	2014 December	On going	
	Update other Electoral Services pages	All	HP	2014 December	On going	
	Update the canvass page and change any dates that refer to the previous year	All	HP	2014 December	On going	
	Archive any previous elections on the website under the relevant page	All	HP	2014 December	On going	
	Update postcode councillor finder. Post code finder for polling station list	All	HP	2014 December	On going	Check with governance
3	Electoral Commission	All				
	Confirm which communication channels the Electoral Commission will be using to inform people about the 2015 elections.	All	Electoral Commission	March?		
	Digital, newspapers, web, PR etc	All	Electoral Commission	March?		

	Who are the channels aimed at: electors, certain groups of electors, administrators etc. Will it be available in other languages.	All	Electoral Commission	March?		
	Consider which resources from the Electoral Commission website to use on our own website/ articles and publicity materials.	All	MC/HP/Comms	March?		
4	Articles					
	Grapevine – article in April issue	All	AW/HP	TBA		News item to be based on Lewisham Life copy.
	Lewisham Life Article February Issue	All	AW/HP	Jan-15	Feb Done	Copy sent to AW by HP in Jan. Aw to send over confirmation of copy to HP.
	Press release re registering to vote/ elections	All	HP to send to AW for distribution.	TBA from EC		Will use EC press release. Press release to go on press area of website and to be sent to local press.
	SE23 – article in April issue	All	HP/AW	TBA		News item to be based on Lewisham Life copy.
	News item on staff intranet re registering to vote/ elections		AW/ HP	February		News item to be based on Lewisham Life copy.
	Details in Goldsmith's newsletter	students	AW/ HP	TBA		News item to be based on Lewisham Life copy.
	Reminder in Lewisham Life newsletter	All	AW/HP	TBA		News item to be based on Lewisham Life copy.
	Press release to local papers	All	AW	TBA		Press release from EC.

	Birthday card to 18-year olds: alter text	attainers	HP	See notes	Done Jan 2015	Birthday card has incorporated message about registering online since summer 2014 and now has message about the 2015 Parliamentary Election.
	Lewisham Pensioners' Forum newsletter	older voters	HP	01/01/2015	Done Feb 2015	News item sent to Lucy Formolli
5	Posters					
	JC Decaux Boards on display for 2 weeks	All	AW to book. HP to send electoral commission poster to AW if available, otherwise we will use an in house design to be divised by Comms and Electoral Services.	See notes	Feb-15	First two weeks of April: Register to vote 6 th March to 17 April Register to Vote message. . 26 April -8 May 2015: UKPGE reminder to go and vote on election day. Posters to use Electoral Commission design if released by electoral commission by poster deadlines.
	Web banner – Have you registered to vote. Also to go on Facebook and Twitter.	All	AW/HP	As with JC Decaux Boards	30th March to 20 April	To tie in with JC Decaux Boards
	Web banner –Remember to vote. Also to go on Facebook and Twitter.	All	AW/HP	As with JC Decaux Boards	21 April to 7 May	To tie in with JC Decaux Boards
	Promote Election results/ Website/ Press	All	AW	08-May-15	8 May once results are announced	
	Artwork from Electoral Commission, (outside Town hall frames), A4 and A3	Pedestrians, Libraries, community centres, and organisations	HP	March?	March	
	Posters and leaflets if available to be distributed for display	Libraries, community centres, and organisations	HP	1st set July/ Sept 2014 2nd Set Feb/ March 2015	Feb/ March	See outreach action plan for further details of poster/ promotional material distribution.

		sixth form colleges: universities				
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