ELECTIONS COMMITTEE		
Report Title	The Annual Canvass	
Key Decision	n/a	Item No.
Wards	All	
Contributors	Jamie Baker, Electoral Services Manager	
Class	Part 1	Date: 19 July 2018

1. Summary

This report gives information on the upcoming annual electoral registration canvass in Lewisham.

2. Purpose

To advise the committee on the plans for the annual canvass.

3. Recommendation

That the Committee make note of this report and consider what more can be done to maximise the response rates to the forms.

4 Report

4.1 Timetable. We start with the first HEF (household enquiry form) being delivered to each property at the start of August. This will be by Royal Mail.

4.2 The forms will also be sent via email to around 60,000 residents. This method was used last year and saved us a considerable amount of money, as well as improving the response rate.

4.3 The second and third forms will be sent out via canvasser. They will know for a resident, and only deliver the form if they cannot catch somebody at home.

4.4 This is a change to how we've traditionally done the canvass. We are looking at ways to improve the canvass response from canvassing, so doing it early and doing it twice are our first 2 big changes this year.

4.5   Another big change is using our canvassers to undertake the deliveries. Usually we would use Royal Mail for every stage with canvassers just doing the door-knocking and delivery of final reminders. This will be a good test to see if canvassers can be used to deliver poll cards and postal votes.

4.6   Budget. We'd like to reduce the overall spend of last year. The approximate spend is around £170k (including all printing and postage etc, but not staffing). By maximising use of canvassers and email we hope to reduce the cost this time.

4.7   On top of that, we'll be looking at how we can improve our registration figures for the rest of the year – during the monthly updates. Current data shows that unless there is an election the registration rates remain very low, including during the canvass. This is the same across all London boroughs and is not a Lewisham phenomenon. We can however try to be innovative and lead the way in finding solutions to this problem.

4.8   Targets. The response rate last year was 87.22%. This was an increase of 15% on the previous year. We expect it will be hard to reach this same figure again because there are no scheduled elections so the 'hook' is not as great. Our target therefore is 85%.

4.9   Other targets: to canvass every single household by knocking on their door at least twice; add at least 5,000 new names to the register; remove at least 5,000 names from the register; collect more email addresses to improve future communication opportunities; improve data processing in the office.

6.   **Legal implications**

6.1   None.

7.   **Equalities implications**

7.1   The delivery of elections is subject to the DDA and Equality Act provisions. In particular we must ensure there is equal access to voter registration during the annual canvass.

7.2   The forms are prescribed, meaning we have little room for modifying them. We can however include a cover letter and wording on the outer envelope to improve their visibility and make it clearer what we are asking the residents to do.

7.3   We intend to be proactive with under-registered groups, where possible. Using data is one area where we were very good last year and where we

can improve even further. University data and info on disabled people is what we're aiming for this time. Both should be achievable and would considerably improve the ease with which these people can get registered.

8. **Financial implications**

8.1 The budget is around £170k, though falls under the annual electoral services budget. Any money saved here would likely be used later in the year chasing people to register.

9. **Crime and disorder implications**

None.

10. **Environmental implications**

There are no environmental implications arising.

11. **Background documents**

See Appendix C – canvass timetable

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