

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Policy and Performance Coordinating Committee

15 January 2014

SUBJECT:	Individual Electoral Registration Scrutiny Review Report
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	Director of Public Health/Head of Policy & Performance
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Cllr Ann McLachlan (Governance and Improvement)
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report (included as Appendix 1) provides a detailed account of a Scrutiny Review which considered Wirral's preparations for the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in 2014. The introduction of IER is a government initiative to transfer the existing property-based electoral register to a new register which will rely on individuals registering themselves.
- 1.2 Members of the Coordinating Committee are requested to consider the contents of this report and note the recommendations arising from this review.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 At its last regular meeting on 3 September 2013, the Coordinating Committee agreed a work programme which included a review of the Council's preparations for IER. Four Members of the Committee volunteered to undertake this work including Cllr Jean Stapleton, Cllr Moira McLaughlin, Cllr Denise Roberts and Cllr Steve Williams.
- 2.2 At the first meeting of the Review Panel, it was agreed Cllr Jean Stapleton would be the Chair of the Panel. The review was conducted over a series of meetings in October/November with appropriate officers providing information as requested by the panel and taking part in a detailed question and answer session.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 The formal process for transferring to IER will commence in summer 2014. The Council's preparation's to date have included:
 - The procurement and implementation of a new Electoral Management System which is compatible with IER requirements

- Working in a partnership with other Cheshire and Merseyside authorities to project plan the transfer to IER and meet a set of milestones as set by Cabinet Office.
- The completion of a test run of the data transfer process in August 2013 in which the Council's success rate exceeded the national average.

3.2 The introduction of IER does present some risk to some the Council in terms of all voters on the register being successfully transferred to the new register. However, the review provided an opportunity for Members to gain a good understanding of the work being undertaken to mitigate that risk.

3.3 The Panel's assessment was that overall Wirral is in a strong position and is likely to have a relatively smooth transfer to IER in 2014. However, Panel Members were concerned that in some wards, notably those with higher levels of known deprivation, there will be higher proportions of voters not automatically transferred. Additional work will have to be undertaken to ensure these voters are successfully transferred.

3.4 The Panel was also concerned that these same locations tend to have higher numbers of people not on the electoral register. As such, Members were keen for the IER process to be used as a vehicle to promote electoral registration more generally to encourage those not registered to register.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 There are none directly relating to this report.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 N/A

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 N/A

7.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

7.1 N/A

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 N/A

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 The implementation of IER will require additional resources to manage the process of transferring from the existing to the new electoral register. The Cabinet Office is committed to meeting these additional costs and allocations of funding are being awarded to local authorities based upon population size and the results of the test data-matching exercise. A financial assessment is included in the full report in Appendix 1 section 5.4.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 N/A

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

~~(a) Yes. The impact review has been sent to the Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator and is located at~~

~~(b) No because there is no relevance to equality.~~

(c) No because of another reason which is

The report is for information to Members and there are no direct equalities implications at this stage.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 N/A

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 N/A

14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Members of the Committee are requested to note the contents and consider the recommendations arising from this report.

14.2 Members of the Committee are requested to consider whether they wish to refer the report to Cabinet.

15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

15.1 To ensure Members have an understanding of the implications of IER for Wirral.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Wirral Council’s Preparations for Individual Electoral Registration Scrutiny Review