

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## Policy and Performance Coordinating Committee

3 September 2014

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| <b>SUBJECT:</b>         | <b>INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION<br/>PROGRESS REPORT</b> |
| <b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b> | <b>ALL</b>   |
| <b>REPORT OF:</b>       | <b>HEAD OF LEGAL AND MEMBERS<br/>SERVICES</b>                |

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides a summary of the progress made in implementing the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The Council's preparation for IER was the subject of a scrutiny review reported to the Coordinating Committee on 15 January 2014. Members are requested to note the progress made and consider any questions or comments relating to this change to the electoral registration process. .

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 The shift to IER involves transferring the registration process from the current property-based system to a new process whereby individuals are responsible for registering themselves. This process is being directed by the Cabinet Office with local authorities having to ensure compliance with a national implementation timetable. The work to transfer to the IER register is now formally under way towards a publication date of 1 December 2014.

2.2 A scrutiny review was completed in Autumn 2013 to consider the potential impact of IER for Wirral and the Council's preparation and readiness for the transition. The outcome of this review was reported to Coordinating Committee on 15 January 2014.

2.3 Members of the Panel were reassured that Wirral's test run for the transfer to the register (completed in August 2013) was above the national average and that preparations were in hand. However, the panel acknowledged the risk that IER could result in higher levels of non-registration, particularly in areas of known deprivation. A request for a report on the IER implementation process featured as one of the recommendations of this scrutiny review report.

### 3.0 PROGRESS TO DATE

3.1 As part of the early preparation for IER during 2013, the following were undertaken:

- The procurement and implementation of a new Electoral Management System which is compatible with IER requirements

- Work in partnership with other Cheshire and Merseyside authorities to project plan the transfer in line with the milestones 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 formal implementation of IER began in June and the process of transferring to the new IER register began on the 1st July 2014.
- 3.3 As part of the transition to the new IER register, the following have been undertaken:
- Data matching exercise with the Department of Work and Pensions followed by local data matching with Council databases including Council Tax and Housing Benefits which resulted in a final match rate of 91.5%.
  - The transitional annual canvass commenced on 15th August and will be completed by the end of November for the new register to be published on the 1st December.
  - Delivery of approximately 218,200 letters to those electors who will be automatically transferred on to the new IER register. No further action is required from these electors.
  - Initial delivery of approximately 19,000 Invitation to Register (ITR) forms to those electors who are required to re-register as a result of not matching with Department of Work and Pensions. Reminder forms are required to be delivered to those who don't respond by the end of August.
  - Initial delivery of approximately 2,340 Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) to those properties where there was no response at the previous annual canvass. Reminder forms are required to be delivered to those who don't respond by the end of August.
  - Initial delivery of approximately 15,665 Household Enquiry Forms (HEF) to those properties recorded as empty.
  - Between **3 July and 10 August**, the Electoral Commission's public awareness campaign went across TV, billboards and online, in England and Wales.
  - The webpage has been updated and provides information on IER and includes a link to online registration.
  - A news item has been published on the wirral website
  - Further local public awareness campaigns are being organised using different channels to focus on different groups. For example, use of the website, social media, local press, etc. We will also be helping to raise awareness amongst target groups, such as young people and recent home movers, by working together with organisations such as further education providers, letting agents and social housing providers.

#### **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 completed in August 2013.

## **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?

No, this 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 of this report and highlight any relevant questions or comments.

## **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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