



---

**REPORT TO:** Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 21 June 2019

**SUBJECT:** Register of Electors

**BY:** The Assessor & ERO

**1. Reason for report**

- 1.1 To update members on IER grant funding from government.
- 1.2 To report on the implementation of the new electoral registration system
- 1.3 To report on the European Union Parliamentary elections.
- 1.4 To report on arrangements for the 2019 canvass.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 **The Board consider the content of this report.**

**3. Update on IER grant funding**

- 3.1 For 2018/19 the Cabinet Office made an initial award of £102,835 to assist with the additional costs imposed by IER. This was substantially below the initial awards of £151,229 for 2017/18 and £174,142 for 2016/17.
- 3.2 The resulting funding gap merited a bid for further financial support by means of the Cabinet Office's justification led bid process. A bid for a further £56,965 was submitted in January 2019. The bid was successful and awarded on 27 March 2019. This resulted in total funding contribution from the Cabinet Office for the IER overhead of £159,800 for 2018/19.
- 3.3 The IER funding awards for 2019/20 are likely to be announced in early July 2019. The UK Government's commitment to meet the additional costs imposed by IER runs to 2019/20, with the anticipation that canvass reform will lead to significant savings when compared to the current canvass regime from 2020/21. To date it has not been possible to quantify the precise impact of the reforms however the Cabinet Office anticipates that the savings will be sufficient to offset the IER grant funding requirements in future years.

#### **4. Electoral Registration System**

- 4.1 Planned implementation of the new electoral registration system was scheduled to take place following the Cairngorms National Park elections in March. After an extended period of acceptance testing the system went live on 1 April. Prior to the go-live date all operational staff had received training with dedicated training also provided for the system managers.

#### **5. European Parliamentary Elections 23 May 2019**

- 5.1 The elections were called at short notice with the Parliamentary Order being introduced on 8 April and coming into force on 10 April. The immediate challenge was the fact that EU citizens who were not citizens of the UK, Ireland, Cyprus or Malta had to make a declaration if they wished to participate in the elections relative to their UK address rather than an address in their former home nation.
- 5.2 Advance planning enabled the service to publish advice online on the 10 April and a downloadable declaration form on 11 April. A letter was sent to the 21,434 EU citizens already on electoral registers in Grampian advising of the requirement to make a declaration by 7 May and provided each with a pre-populated declaration form (Supplementary European Parliament elections registration form). The letters and pre-populated declaration forms were issued to each elector from 15 April. In order to minimise delay email was used whenever possible.
- 5.3 The service dealt with 5,091 applications to register to vote during the period of 13 April – 7 May, of which 21% of electors were already correctly registered. Corresponding volumes of applications for earlier elections are provided in the table below. 2,765 declaration forms were received from EU citizens.
- 5.4 A summary of application volumes for the last four elections are provided in the table.

Applications	SPE 5/5/16	EUR 23/6/16	LGE 4/5/17	UKPGE 8/6/17	EPE 23/5/19
Registration	14,823	14,540	11,256	17,510	5091
Postal vote	6,728	9,698	4,261	8,866	3,004
Proxy vote	907	3,305	578	3,102	813
Emergency proxy	52	126	15	59	28

- 5.5 Two formal complaints have been made by EU citizens who were not able to participate in the elections on 23 May relative to their Grampian addresses. In both cases they had received declaration forms issued to them by email before 17 April but did not take up the opportunity to make the required declaration. Accordingly their names were not included in the registers supplied to the Local Returning Officers for the elections on 23 May.

- 5.6 Following elections the ERO is required to write to all postal voters who have their absent vote ballot rejected by the Returning Officers. Letters are being issued to 702 voters following the elections on 23 May.

## **6. Canvass 2019**

- 6.1 The 2019 canvass should be the last 'traditional' canvass of all addresses. It will commence in July and follow the now established IER two-stage approach involving a household enquiry form that is used to update household information that in turn will give rise to invitations to register to vote or reviews to remove those electors who are no longer resident at the address in question. With the support of expertise from Moray Council the canvass printing, mailing and response service elements are currently in the procurement process.
- 6.2 A national publicity campaign on a shared costs basis and coordinated by the SAA Electoral Registration Committee will accompany the canvass.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 Funding uncertainties remain an issue for the service for 2019/20. The precise shape of the proposed canvass reforms for 2020 and beyond, along with the resultant impact on resources, has yet to be determined.
- 7.2 Implementation of the new electoral registration system took place on 1 April 2019 and the successful delivery of registration services in the subsequent short notice election on 23 May is testament to the dedication and commitment of the personnel involved in the planning and implementation of the administrative and IT services within the organisation.
- 7.3 The 2019 canvass providers are currently in the procurement process with canvass commencement in July.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton