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**REPORT TO:** Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 16 November 2018

**SUBJECT:** Register of Electors Annual Canvass

**BY:** The Assessor & ERO

**1. Reason for Report**

- 1.1 Inform the Board of progress with the annual canvass.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Board note the content of this report.

**3. Annual Canvass**

- 3.1 The 2018 canvass is the fourth full canvass since the introduction of individual electoral registration (IER). This canvass, of the 281,737 dwellings in Grampian benefitted from previous canvasses in three distinct areas:
- Early start date
  - Exempted sole occupancy dwellings
  - Early visits
- 3.2 The 2017/18 canvass commenced on 2 July 2018, thus maximising the time period available prior to publication of revised registers on 1 December 2018. The canvass commenced 2 weeks later in 2017 and 6 weeks later in 2016 as a result of the extraordinary general election on 8 June 2017 and vote on membership of the EU on 1 July 2016.
- 3.3 2017/18 is the first year where canvass cost saving measures have been made available to EROs. These measures mean that where a householder registers to vote and indicates that they are the sole elector resident at that address, the requirement on the ERO to carry out the following annual canvass at that address is waived. This meant that household enquiry forms were not required to be issued to 3,098 dwellings.
- 3.4 In a move to increase the effectiveness of the household canvass and minimise the number of visits canvassers have to make during late autumn and early winter a sample of 22,898 dwellings that had a history of non-responses were identified and visited by canvassers during the period July – September.

- 3.5 IER requires each new elector notified on the returned household canvass form to be supported by an individual application to register. If a new potential elector does not apply to register independently, the ERO is required to issue an invitation to register by post. Since 2 July the service has issued 18,869 invitations to register and processed 16,590 additions to the register.
- 3.6 Where an elector has moved out and has been crossed out on the household canvass form, IER requires further verification that the person is no longer resident before the ERO can remove an elector's name from the register. 12,873 electors who have moved away have been processed. Where it has not been possible to verify that the person in question has moved out a review must be carried out. For the period from 2 July to date, 9,225 reviews have been initiated.
- 3.7 The return statistics as at 29 October 2018 are provided in the table:-

Year	Issued	Returned		Method of Return (%)			
		Number	%	Post/Other	Phone	Online	Text
29 Oct 2018	278,639	228,276	82%	54%	6%	34%	6%
27 Nov 2017	279,280	230,631	83%	59%	6%	28%	7%
21 Nov 2016	276,440	216,598	78%	65%	6%	24%	5%
23 Nov 2015	273,181	205,264	75%	70%	2%	26%	2%

The corresponding return information prior to publication of the revised register for the previous three canvasses is provided for comparison purposes.

- 3.8 The steady change in method of return from traditional postage of a manually completed household enquiry form to automated response channels such as telephone, online or SMS text is a welcome move and has been driven by messaging in canvass materials and media releases through corresponding local authority communications teams. The messaging for the 2018 canvass has focussed on the potential cost savings for the public purse.
- 3.9 The volume and percentage of automated responses are provided in the table:-

Year	Number of automated responses	% of total canvass
29 Oct 2018	102,989	45%
27 Nov 2017	93,919	41%
21 Nov 2016	73,379	35%
23 Nov 2015	63,041	30%

## **6. December Register**

- 6.1 The Electoral Register will be published on 1 December with copies being made available via the secure download facility to elected members, MSPs, MPs etc as prescribed. Whilst it will contain details of attainers aged 16 or over, no data for registered attainers who are under 16 will be published.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The 2018 canvass is benefitting from an earlier commencement date, exempted dwellings and a fresh approach to visiting addresses which have a history of not responding to canvass forms. These measures along with the messaging to increase the use of automated response channels are making the current canvass less 'unsustainable' ahead of anticipated changes to legislation that are currently under consideration with the objective of allowing EROs to adopt a more focussed and resource effective canvass.

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