



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 6 November 2020

SUBJECT: Register of Electors

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 Inform the Board of progress with the annual canvass.
- 1.2 Provide an update on the autumn by-elections.
- 1.3 Update the Board on current developments.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Board note the content of this report.**

3. Annual Canvass

- 3.1 The 2020 canvass is the first canvass that has used data comparison to focus registration resources. All households across Grampian have been allocated to one of three activity routes for the 2020 canvass.

- Route 1 - Households where data suggests no change to the composition of the household has taken place.
- Route 2 - Households where data suggests that changes in the household composition have taken place.
- Route 3 - Communal residential households.

Canvass activity for each route is designed to focus resources where they are needed to a much greater extent than was possible prior to the 2020 canvass reforms.

- 3.2 The canvass activity varies according to the route a household is allocated to.
- 3.3 Route 1 households were sent a letter inviting them to go online and update any details.
- 3.4 Route 2 households were sent a letter requiring them respond and update their details. Failure to respond led to a traditional canvass form being issued to them and failing a response to that a third contact is made by way of another letter and, wherever possible, contact by other means.
- 3.5 Route 3 households are allocated to individual coordinators who make contact with the manager/senior house person and update details through that contact.
- 3.6 The allocation of households in Grampian is provided below along with the number of households allocated to Route 2 where second and third contacts were required.

Route	First contact	Second contact	Third contact
1	191,947	n/a	n/a
2	95,052	55,001	41,225
3	271		

- 3.7 IER processes meant that responding to a canvass contact to update household information does not automatically result in a new resident having their name added to the electoral register. The IER processes require all new electors to make an individual application to register in addition to updating their household information when asked to do during the annual canvass.
- 3.8 In terms of streamlining the processes, we have promoted the use of individual registration applications embedded in the online canvass response service. Initial indications suggest that this has been an effective approach to the challenge of securing individual registration applications once a new householder has made a canvass response.
- 3.9 Between the period of 1 August 2020 to 25 October 2020, 21,495 individual applications to register have been made in Grampian. The sources of these applications are provided below.

Source of application to register	Volume
Embedded online application	12,959
Gov.uk digital service	7,566
Telephone	758
Paper form via post	205
Email	7

4. **By-elections**

- 4.1 By-elections in Aberdeenshire (Ellon & District – 15 October) and Aberdeen (Kincorth/Nigg/Cove – 5 November) have been supported whilst respecting the health and safety issues presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Resilience planning included on-site operations across all three offices and special arrangements for a potential spike in emergency proxy applications on or before the date of the polls.

5. **Developments**

- 5.1 The Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2020 was laid before Parliament on 21 October. This order makes a number of changes to the rules which apply to elections to the Scottish Parliament. The principal development is the proposed extension of the emergency proxy provisions for electors who are required to self-isolate and as such not be able to attend a polling station in person.
- 5.2 Contingency planning for the Scottish Parliamentary election scheduled for 6 May 2021 has been advanced through the work of the SAA Electoral Registration Committee, the Electoral Commission, the Electoral Management Board and the Scottish Government. Research by the Electoral Commission suggests that there could be a significant increase in electors applying to vote by post and in preparation for that additional cost estimates have been provided to the Scottish Government.

6 **Conclusion**

- 6.1 The reformed canvass procedures have been implemented for 2020 and publication of the revised registers for 1 December is on schedule.
- 6.2 The service has serviced two by-elections in a Covid-secure environment with resilience planning in place to ensure service continuity during the pandemic.
- 6.3 Work is in hand to prepare for significant volumes of absent vote applications and emergency proxy appointments ahead of the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections.

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