



---

**REPORT TO:** Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 4 February 2022

**SUBJECT:** Electoral Registration

**BY:** The Assessor & ERO

**1. Reason for Report**

1.1 To update the board on developments in Electoral Registration.

**2. Recommendation**

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

**3. Background**

3.1 The annual canvass concluded on 30 November 2021 and revised registers were published on 1 December 2021.

3.2 The annual signature refresh has commenced.

3.3 Preparation for the local government elections on 5 May 2022 has commenced including the issue of Household Notification letters.

3.4 The 2023 review of the UK Parliamentary boundaries is entering the second consultation stage.

**4. Annual Canvass and revised registers**

4.1 The annual canvass concluded on 30 November 2021 with information received latterly being mainly in response to door to door canvass visits.

4.2 The new canvass model allows for resources to be concentrated on properties where changes may have occurred – Route 2. Door to door visits were carried out in two phases, with a total of 41,546 visits being made. This adds to the 3,003 telephone canvass contacts making a total of 43,547 personal contacts. Under the old canvass model the required number of personal follow ups would have exceeded 70,000.

- 4.3 Personnel carrying out canvassing duties were a mix of core and temporary staff employed specifically for canvassing duties supplemented by core admin, valuation and technical staff. With the wide dispersal of addresses in rural areas the expertise of experienced survey staff was of particular value.
- 4.4 Revised registers were published on 1 December 2021 and statistical reports were subsequently prepared and submitted to the Electoral Commission and National Records of Scotland.

The following table summarises the last three revised registers of local government and Scottish Parliamentary electors along with postal voters.

<b>Revised registers</b>	<b>1 February 2020</b>	<b>1 December 2020</b>	<b>1 December 2021</b>
Number of electors	445,690	448,331	448,607
Number of postal voters	91,070	88,494	119,213

## **5. Annual Signature Refresh**

- 5.1 Absent voters are required to provide a refresh to their signature every 5 years. The annual signature refresh commenced with the issue of 10,966 letters on 14 January 2022. Reminders will be issued in early February and where an elector fails to respond within the period of 6 weeks from the issue of the initial notice we are obliged to cancel their absent vote. Cancellation notices will be issued to these electors along with a further application form which they can complete should they wish to reapply.

## **6. Preparation for local government elections 5 May 2022**

- 6.1 During the preparation for the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2021 a Household Notification Letter (HNL) was issued to every household in Scotland by local EROs. The letter detailed the current electorate aged over 16 at the property, whether each elector was a postal voter and provided advice on how to register for those who had not already done so.
- 6.2 The purpose of the letter was to encourage citizens to take early action where required to register and/or to apply to vote by post, with particular reference to the prevailing circumstances of the COVID pandemic. Following projections that the level of postal voting could double with a large surge of applications expected to be received close to the deadline for receipt, significant additional staffing resources had been put in place to cope with this surge. Ultimately the number of postal voters rose from the 88,494 quoted in the table at 4.4 to 123,467 postal voters at the polls on 6 May 2021.

- 6.3 The HNL exercise will be repeated this year, with letters due to be issued on 31 January 2021. Given the current high uptake of postal voting we do not expect a similar upsurge in postal voting to that seen in 2021 and would expect to manage any influx of applications with our core admin team.
- 6.4 The HNL content was agreed through the Scottish Assessors Association Electoral Registration Committee and the majority of registration officers across Scotland will again be issuing HNLs. The issue of the letters will be supplemented by TV advertising agreed and coordinated across all ERO areas in Scotland
- 6.5 The Electoral Commission (EC) is running a public engagement campaign commencing with Welcome to your vote week (24-30 January) aimed at schools and youth groups and encourages them to run political literacy sessions and to support young people with getting ready to vote. Other strands of the campaign include GOT5 registration drive from mid March to 18 April, a voter information leaflet to be delivered to all households at the end of March, a voter awareness day for foreign nationals on 10 March and working with various partner organisations to try to reach all sectors of the community including blind and partially sighted, homeless and prisoners.
- 6.6 The EC campaigns will utilise a range of media channels with resources being made available to EROs to assist with local public engagement campaigns. Our local strategy is being developed to complement the EC campaign and we have recently created a Twitter account.
- 6.7 A joint Electoral Management Board for Scotland/Electoral Commission seminar on Thursday 27 January 2022 - Preparedness and Building on experience - was attended by key staff involved in electoral registration.
- 6.8 Meetings have been scheduled with all 3 local council election teams in early February to help promote the close cooperation needed between ERO and RO teams to ensure the smooth running of any electoral event

## **7. UK Parliamentary Constituency boundary changes**

- 7.1 Comments from the initial consultation are due to be published in early 2022. A schedule of hearings has been published which will take place during the secondary consultation period from 10 February to 23 March. These will allow the public to make comments on the representations already received as well as give oral evidence on the initial proposals.
- 7.2 Speaking slots can be booked, and where people cannot attend they can make representations in writing.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 For the second year running the team has managed to complete the major exercise which is the annual canvass with the majority of staff continuing to be based at home.

8.2 With major electoral events now occurring in most years the operational tempo remains high. Building on the experience gained at the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2021 we are confident that we can successfully support the 3 council election teams in delivering well run elections, whether from at home or in the office and look forward to doing so.

Author of Report: Linda H Smith, Principal Admin Officer