



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 24 August 2018

SUBJECT: Register of Electors

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 To update members on grant funding from government.
- 1.2 To report on arrangements for the 2018 canvass.
- 1.3 To provide an update on arrangements to update the electoral registration system

2. Recommendation

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

3. Update on grant funding provision

- 3.1 For 2017/18 the Cabinet Office made an initial award of £151,229 to account for with the additional costs of IER. This was supplemented by a further award of £26,000 that was made to cover IT development costs.
- 3.2 Current indications are that Cabinet Office will seek to honour the existing commitment to provide top-up funding for IER related activities to 2019/20 however a reduction in the actual amounts awarded is anticipated and EROs have yet to receive formal notice of what funds have been allocated to them for 2018/19.
- 3.3 In previous years the Cabinet Office has also provided a justification led bid process that permitted EROs to claim additional funds where the original grant allocation did not meet the full additional costs of IER. For the last two financial years a review of IER costs in Grampian demonstrated that justification led bids were not merited.
- 3.4 Indications are that justification led bid option will be made available to EROs by the Cabinet Office for 2018/19 and arrangements are in hand locally to ensure that any costs greater than the 2018/19 award are quantified in order to inform any subsequent claim for additional funds.

4.0 Canvass 2018

- 4.1 The 2018 canvass will follow the now established 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. Where no response is made to the household enquiry form the ERO is required to send two reminders and make a personal visit. Similarly where a potential elector is identified but fails to respond to an invitation to register, a further two reminders and personal visit are required.
- 4.2 Innovation in two distinct areas is being implemented for the 2018 canvass:-
- Planned personal visits - Addresses of some 20,000 long term non-responding households have been identified and personal visits will be made to these addresses during July and August rather than October and November. This measure will move a significant volume of outdoor canvass activity from autumn to summer with advantages for canvass recruitment and delivery.
 - Messaging to direct households towards automated response channels. Significant savings in postages and also processing have been made in recent years as work to promote the use of automated response services has resulted in 95,000 households using these cost effective response channels – online, SMS text or automated telephone. The canvass pack that will be issued to households this July will carry quantified cost information to encourage the householder to use the more cost effective automated response channels in preference to signing and returning by post the completed canvass form.
- 4.3 Through joint working via the SAA Electoral Registration Committee, the canvass that is scheduled to commence on 1 July will be supported by radio and digital media publicity campaigns across Scotland.

5.0 Electoral registration system

- 5.1 The previously advised procurement process was completed at the start of this month and a contract is currently being drawn up with the assistance of Moray Council's procurement team. An implementation plan is in preparation that will involve significant technical input by both customer and supplier to ensure delivery at all three Board offices for the end of the year.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Funding uncertainties continue to be an issue for the service. Whilst local government is responsible for funding EROs, the extent of funding to be provided by the Cabinet Office for 2018/19 has yet to be realised.
- 6.2 The 2018 canvass is about to commence with measures to encourage householders to use the more cost effective automated response channels. The planning for the personal visits element of the canvass is moving towards a proactive rather than reactive approach that will improve effectiveness.

6.3 A replacement for the in-house electoral registration system is now at the initial contract and implementation planning stage.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton