



REPORT TO: GRAMPIAN VALUATION JOINT BOARD ON 27 JANUARY 2023

SUBJECT: ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

BY: PRINCIPAL ADMIN OFFICER

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To update the Board on current 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 2022 and revised registers were published on 1 December 2022.
- 3.2 Support to the Moray Council election team at the Buckie by-election was concluded and we are now assisting the Aberdeen City Council election team in delivery of the Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone by-election.
- 3.3 The Elections Act 2022 - The Voter Authority Certificate application process is now available.
- 3.4 A major upgrade to our Electoral Management system including new Eros elections and Voter Authority Certificate register checking functionality has taken place.
- 3.5 Work is continuing at the Boundary Commission for Scotland and Boundaries Scotland on constituency boundary changes.
- 3.6 The annual signature refresh has commenced

4. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION UPDATE

Annual Canvass 2022

4.1 The annual canvass concluded on 30 November 2022, with all the required follow up activity being completed prior to that date.

- 4.2 Over 56,000 personal contacts were made with households in Route 2 properties – i.e. properties where there may have been changes in occupancy. Of these contacts 4,115 were made using the telephone canvass module.
- 4.3 In the latter stages of the canvass training on the tablet canvassing app took place and the tablets were used by the 3 full time Electoral Registration Assistants and by 2 of the temporary canvassers. The new facility was very well received by the staff with the instant mapping of properties providing a great time saving in the planning phase and in route finding, being particularly helpful in rural areas. We will be aiming to increase the number of tablets next year and beyond.
- 4.4 Our overall response rate for Route 2 properties reached 62.2%. This is an increase of 2% on the 2021 level. While this may appear to be a modest figure, our 2021 response level was the second highest relative to all other Valuation Joint Board and single authority council ERO services in Scotland.
- 4.5 Revised registers were published on 1 December 2022 and promptly distributed to those individuals and organisations who are entitled to receive them “on publication”. Further work was then carried out to distribute “on request” copies and to process sales to organisations who are entitled to purchase the full register, principally credit reference agencies and the Scottish Courts and Tribunals service.
- 4.6 Printing of paper copies of the register for distribution to local and national libraries is currently in progress.
- 4.7 Statistical reports were 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.

Revised registers	1 December 2020	1 December 2021	1 December 2022
Number of electors	448,331	448,607	448,915
Number of postal voters	88,494	119,213	119,611

We also observed an increase in both Parliamentary and local government attainers.

Local Government by-election – Moray Ward 3 Buckie

- 4.8 This election took place on 3 November 2022 and our office was staffed throughout the hours of the poll – 7am to 10pm.
- 4.9 One emergency proxy appointment was approved on the basis of work related reasons, prior to polling day.

Local Government by-election – Aberdeen City 1 Dyce/Bucksburn/Danestone

- 4.10 Preparations are underway in respect of the by-election to be held on 23 February 2023.
- 4.11 Set up of the election on our Electoral Management System (EMS) took place immediately following a major system upgrade. Data for the initial issue of poll cards was passed to the Aberdeen City Council elections team on 17 January with these cards due to be issued on 24 January.
- 4.12 The main statutory deadlines in relation to applications to register and for postal and proxy voting at this by-election are:

Application to register to vote Midnight Tuesday 7 February 2023

Application to vote by post, change
or cancel an absent vote 5pm Wednesday 8 February 2023

Application to vote by proxy 5pm Wednesday 15 February 2023

The Elections Act 2022

- 4.13 The first of the statutory instruments in relation to The Elections Act 2022 which have effect in Scotland have now been made, they are:

Voter identification

[The Voter Identification Regulations 2022](#) which came into force on 16 January 2023.

Accessibility

[The Assistance with Voting for Persons with Disabilities \(Amendments\) Regulations 2022](#) which came into force on 7 December 2022.

- 4.14 The application service for Voter Authority Certificates, including the ERO Portal for processing of applications, went live on Monday 16 January. The digital team at DHLUC will continue to develop and refine the site, introducing additional features over time.
- 4.15 As at 19 January 2023 we had received one application in Grampian.
- 4.16 The Business Change Team at DHLUC have delivered various training and drop in sessions in December 2022 and January 2023 in order to provide support to local authorities with the introduction and operation of the service. These have been attended by members of our senior admin team and used to develop training sessions for our core admin staff.
- 4.17 The Electoral Commission launched their public awareness campaign on 9 December 2022 and this is focussed on authorities in England who are running elections in May 2023.
- 4.18 Samples of the VAC are included with this report as **Appendices 1 and 2**.

4.19 Further provisions to be introduced by the Act will take effect at various points throughout 2022.

New Elections Module and VAC functionality

4.20 Immediately on return from the Christmas break we started work on a major upgrade to the Eros Electoral Management System, working with Aberdeenshire Council IT staff and outside contractors at Incremental Group.

4.21 This upgrade includes:

- a major redesign of the layout of Eros
- wideranging changes and improvements to the functionality for setting up and running elections
- the introduction of the register checking functionality for VAC applications

4.22 Following the completion of post installation tasks, key staff tested the functionality of the system before quickly moving on to adding the forthcoming by-election to the system and working through the steps to produce initial poll card data for upload to the Aberdeen City Council election team.

4.23 With regard to the elections functionality, initial impressions are good with the set up processes being greatly simplified and run times for storing and extracting data being much reduced.

4.24 Subsequently all core staff have had their new access set up and they have now undertaken familiarisation with the new look system.

Constituency Boundary changes

4.25 The Boundary Commission for Scotland continues to make progress with the 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. The 4 week consultation period on the revised proposals closed on 5 December 2022. Final recommendations will be submitted before 1 July 2023.

4.26 Boundaries Scotland have commenced the second review of Scottish Parliament boundaries. Provisional proposals are expected in Spring 2023.

Annual Signature Refresh

4.27 Absent voters are required to provide a refresh to their signature every 5 years (pending changes relative to Parliamentary electors to be introduced by the Elections Act 2022).

4.28 The annual signature refresh commenced on 11 January 2023 with the issue of 10,482 initial letters. Reminders will be issued in early February and where no response is received within the period of 6 weeks from the issue of the initial notice, we are obliged to cancel the absent vote. Cancellation notices will be issued to these non-responding electors along with a further application form which they can complete should they wish to reapply.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Another busy year concluded with successful delivery of another major set of elections, the annual canvass and a by-election, thanks to the hard work of both core and temporary staff.

5.2 Although there are no major elections planned for the coming year, the service faces the challenges of implementing all of the new provisions of the Elections Act as well as applying Parliamentary boundary changes prior to the next UK Parliamentary election.

Author of Report: Linda H Smith, Principal Administrative Officer