

## DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

26 OCTOBER 2015

Commenced: 3.00pm

Terminated: 4.10pm

Present: Councillors Cooney (In the Chair), Fairfoull, J. Fitzpatrick K. Quinn, Taylor, Ward and Warrington

Apology for Councillor Buckley

Absence:

### 1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

#### AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2015 be accepted as a correct record.

### 2. INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (Governance and Resources), which provided an update on the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the steps that were to be taken prior to the publication of the new electoral register on 1 December 2015.

Members were reminded that by law the transition to IER in Great Britain, which began in Summer 2014, would end on 1 December 2015. At that point any entries for electors who were not registered individually, that is those who had not either been confirmed or successfully made individual applications to register to vote would be removed from the register.

It was explained that if transition ended immediately 1.9 million entries would be removed from registers nationally, in Tameside 6,927 would be removed from the register. It was likely that many of the entries that would be removed from the register when the transition ended would be redundant (i.e. they related to people who were no longer resident at the address). However, it was not possible to be certain how many were in fact for electors who were still resident and eligible to be registered to vote but who were not registered individually.

The registers published on 1 December 2015 would form the basis of the registers to be used at the May 2016 elections. In addition, the 1 December 2015 registers would be used for determining the distribution and boundaries of parliamentary constituencies and other electoral areas.

Members were informed that comprehensive household activity had been taking place from 1 July 2015. Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) had been sent to all 100,000 Tameside properties on 14 July, an initial reminder was sent out on 16 September, the reminder had been sent to 55,000 properties and a further reminder was scheduled to be sent out on 6 November.

In addition to the standard required actions other steps had been taken to maintain the accuracy of the register including the following:

- Data matching and analysis to identify low registration levels and target unconfirmed electors;
- Personal letters to all unconfirmed electors;
- During the canvass regular press releases have been issued and will continue until the end of the canvass;
- Extensive use of social media, large number of posts on Council Facebook and twitter and by partner organisations such as colleges;

- Encouragement to register at all budget consultation events;
- Encouragement to register on Leader's blog;
- Use of the Citizen;
- Internal communications encouraging staff to register to vote;
- Use of publicity material such as poster and banners across the borough until the end of the canvass;
- Use of bookmarks and business cards at various events;
- Working with Registered Social Landlords, CVAT, Fire Service and Bin Swap staff to target particular areas and groups;
- All callers to customer services are reminded to register and assisted in doing so where possible.

In September 2013 the Electoral Commission published a new performance standards framework, there were two performance standards for the transition to IER broken down into four challenges. The performance standards were:

1. Understand the particular challenges in you registration area and develop a plan for engaging with residents which responds to these challenges;
2. Deliver your implementation plan, monitoring progress and making amendments where necessary.

The objective of performance standard 1 was to ensure that all Electoral Registration Officers had in place a local public engagement strategy reflecting the own specific challenges, taking into account their confirmation dry run results and an implementation plan which sets out how they planned to deliver the transition as a whole. The Electoral Commission had previously indicated that they were confident Tameside had in place the necessary strategies and plans to be able to meet the challenges of IER in the local area. An assessment of performance against performance standard 2 would be made following completion of the canvass.

In conclusion it was stated that since beginning work on IER the key issue had always been how many people might drop off the register at the conclusion of the transition, this was originally scheduled to be 1 December 2016 and had be re-scheduled for 1 December 2015. It was explained that after the initial data matching exercise in July 2013 there had been 26,658 reds and 2,535 ambers, this meant that there were 29,193 unconfirmed electors. Since then the number of unconfirmed electors had been reduced to 6,927 and intensive work would be undertaken up to the publication of the new register on 1 December.

**AGREED:**

**That the update be noted and it was agreed that Members would do all they could to support the electoral canvass process.**

**3. ELECTORAL COMMISSION BULLETINS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director (Governance and Resources), which provided Members with recent copies of the Electoral Commission news bulletin which set out current issues affecting the democratic framework for local government.

**AGREED:**

**That the report be noted.**

**CHAIR**