

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ELECTORAL REGISTRATION</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>CAROLYN WHEATER, CITY SOLICITOR</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Performance Scrutiny Committee with an update on electoral registration in the City of Lincoln, as requested by the Chair of the Committee.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Register for the City of Lincoln was published on 1 December 2018 following the statutory canvass undertaken between July and November 2018.
- 2.2 This report sets out the process that is undertaken as part of the canvass, the latest electorate information together with comparisons from previous years.

## **3. Electoral Registration Canvass – Process**

- 3.1 The Electoral Registration Officer is required to issue a Household Enquiry Form to all properties within the registration area within the period of 1 July to 30 November. This must be a paper Household Enquiry Form in a prescribed format which cannot be changed and this cannot be sent via email or any other electronic means.
- 3.2 Rather than use the Royal Mail postage service, all Household Enquiry Forms in the City of Lincoln are hand delivered by a team of canvassers, which is cheaper and more effective.
- 3.3 Non-responses to the Household Enquiry Form are followed up by issuing two reminders, also hand delivered by canvassers, prior to the making of a personal visit should no response to the original Household Enquiry Form or any of the reminders have been received.
- 3.4 A Household Enquiry Form is not a registration form but is solely a mechanism to collect information about who is resident and eligible to register at a particular address. The Household Enquiry Form will be pre-populated with any existing entries on the register which can be confirmed or amended. The information provided on a Household Enquiry Form will act as a prompt for further action based on the response received.
- 3.5 Responses to the Household Enquiry Form will fall into the following broad categories:
- No changes;
  - Names of existing registered electors crossed off;
  - Additions;

- Changes to existing electors' details;
- Requests for changes to absent voting and open register choices.

- 3.6 Where no response is received to a Household Enquiry Form, or the reminders and personal visit, data matching using the Council's Council Tax data is undertaken to confirm the residence of anyone already registered at the address. Where the residence of an elector can be confirmed via Council Tax the elector will remain on the register. If the elector cannot be confirmed via Council Tax as living at the property, they will be removed from the register.
- 3.7 Any potential new electors, or additions, identified on the Household Enquiry Form in the space provided will need to be sent an Invitation to Register. This provides each individual with instructions as to how to submit an application.
- 3.8 The majority of Invitations to Register are hand delivered by canvassers, although some are sent via Royal Mail depending on when a large enough batch is ready for printing and distribution.
- 3.9 Non-responses to Invitations to Register are also followed up by issuing two reminders and a personal visit by a canvasser should no response to the reminders be received. An Invitation to Register, or reminders, can be sent via email. These are currently hand delivered or sent via Royal Mail.

#### **4. Electoral Registration Canvass – City of Lincoln Council Statistics**

- 4.1 All 49,561 properties at the commencement of the canvass in Lincoln were sent Household Enquiry Forms.
- 4.2 10,000 of these properties were categorised as being student accommodation. Access to the student campus at the University of Lincoln is restricted so an arrangement with the post room at the University is in place for their staff to make delivery of Household Enquiry Forms upon commencement of the academic year.
- 4.3 The final electorate published on 1 December 2018 at the close of the canvass was 60,138.

#### **5. Electorate – City of Lincoln**

- 5.1 The electorate for the City of Lincoln varies throughout the year, with a significant number of changes made during the canvass which seeks to ensure that the electoral register is as up to date and accurate as possible.
- 5.2 Household Notification Letters are sent to all properties in the city in January each year as a further check to ensure that the information held on the Electoral Register is correct and accurate. This will also have an impact on the electorate, with numerous additions and deletions to the register anticipated once these letters are sent.
- 5.3 Poll Cards for scheduled elections in May will be sent to all eligible electors in March each year due to there being local or national electoral events occurring every year. This also generates additions or deletions to the electoral register.
- 5.4 In addition, a significant amount of publicity takes place locally and nationally

ahead of scheduled elections to remind people not to lose their right to vote, encouraging people to register. This inevitably also contributes to additions to the electoral register.

- 5.5 The electorate for the City of Lincoln on 1 December 2018 was confirmed as being 60,138 following the close of the annual canvass. Comparisons to previous years where data is held are set out below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Electorate</b>
1 December 2018	60,138
1 December 2017	61,415
1 December 2016	61,689
1 December 2015	60,209

- 5.6 A breakdown of the electorate per electoral ward as at 1 December 2018 following the publication of the register at the close of the annual canvas is set out below:

<b>Electoral Ward</b>	<b>1 December 2018</b>
Glebe	5,845
Castle	5,195
Abbey	5,707
Carholme	4,659
Park	5,476
Boultham	4,417
Moorland	5,490
Witham	6,069
Minster	5,038
Hartsholme	6,324
Birchwood	5,918

- 5.7 The electorate for the City Council elections held on 3 May 2018 was 61,790. Comparisons to previous local elections are set out below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Electorate</b>
2018	61,790
2017 (County Council elections)	62,556
2017 (Parliamentary General Election)	N/A*
2016 (combined with PCC elections)	63,270**
2015 (combined with Parliamentary)	67,557*

\* The electorate for the Parliamentary General Election in 2017 consists of different eligibility to that of local elections, meaning that it would not be the same comparable information. The electorate for the combined elections in 2015 reflects the local election electorate. The relatively high electorate is reflective of the fact that the local elections were combined with the Parliamentary elections in 2015.

\*\* The 2016 elections were 'all-out' elections following the boundary review, whereas the other City Council elections were elections by thirds.

- 5.8 A breakdown of electorate per City Council electoral ward at each respective City

Council election is set out below:

<b>Electoral Ward</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2016*</b>	<b>2015**</b>
Glebe	5,954	6,001	5,559
Castle	5,379	5,465	6,155
Abbey	5,936	6,001	7,283
Carholme	4,965	5,289	8,360
Park	5,763	5,896	5,700
Boultham	4,619	4,653	5,667
Moorland	5,502	5,692	5,754
Witham	6,111	6,172	5,851
Minster	5,131	5,432	5,885
Hartsholme	6,398	6,492	5,281
Birchwood	6,032	6,177	6,062

\* The 2016 elections were 'all-out' elections following the boundary review, whereas the other City Council elections were elections by thirds.

\*\* The relatively high electorate in some electoral wards is reflective of the fact that the local elections were combined with Parliamentary elections in 2015.

- 5.9 In addition to the above elections, a By-Election was held in the Carholme Ward in October 2017. The electorate for the Carholme By-Election was 5,335.

## **6. Students**

- 6.1 Officers continue to maintain a good relationship with staff at the University of Lincoln to ensure that electoral registration is encouraged, particularly in respect of the delivery of Household Enquiry Forms and promoting the fact that students are entitled to register at their student accommodation as well as at their home address.
- 6.2 In engaging with students over the telephone or via email regarding electoral registration, officers within the Elections Team, despite promoting that students can register at their student accommodation as a second address, are regularly informed that individuals either have no interest in registering at all or are content with being registered solely at their home address.
- 6.3 In previous years the Elections Team has set up stalls at Fresher's Week and provided stationary packs for students with details as to how to register to vote. In addition, the team worked with the University of Lincoln to ensure that a message appeared on students' login screens on their computers within the campus to encourage them to register to vote. This included a link to the Government website for electoral registration. Unfortunately these activities did not result in a noticeable increase in students registering to vote.
- 6.4 The Council's elections team and communications team will continue to work with the University of Lincoln to promote the electoral registration of students.

## **7. CIPFA Statistical Neighbours and Lincolnshire Local Authorities**

- 7.1 In contacting the Council's CIPFA statistical neighbours, below is a table which shows the electorate on 1 December 2017, 1 December 2018 and for any local elections held in 2018 in respect of those who responded:

<b>Authority</b>	<b>1 December 2017</b>	<b>1 December 2018</b>	<b>Local Elections 2018</b>
Burnley Borough Council	65,897	66,929	66,472
Cannock Chase Council	74,332	74,212	None held
Chesterfield Borough Council	79,723	78,961	None held
Exeter City Council	88,979	90,042	90,017
Ipswich Borough Council	96,183	96,598	96,891
Norwich City Council	102,353	99,385	101,734
Preston City Council	95,479	91,675	84,516*

\* three Wards uncontested – electorate information for the three uncontested Wards is not included in this figure. Unfortunately the authority was unable to confirm the electorate for the three Wards for the same period as the election so the figure does not reflect the whole Council area.

- 7.2 Similarly, below is the same information for the other authorities in Lincolnshire:

<b>Authority</b>	<b>1 December 2017</b>	<b>1 December 2018</b>
Boston Borough Council	46,386	47,500
East Lindsey District Council	109,437	109,548
North Kesteven District Council	88,103	89,231
South Holland District Council	71,754	71,579
South Kesteven District Council	108,320	106,923
West Lindsey District Council	73,679	73,180

- 7.3 This comparison, both with CIPFA statistical neighbours and neighbouring authorities, indicates that it is not uncommon to see a lower electorate rate in 2018 compared to the previous year in 2017 after completion of the annual canvass meaning that the City of Lincoln is not unique in this respect.

## **8. The Elections Team and Resources**

- 8.1 The Elections Team currently consists of 2.5 fulltime equivalent officers. The Elections Manager is also the Democratic Services Team Leader and commits his time between the two teams on a 50:50 basis, with a fulltime Electoral Services Officer and a fulltime Electoral Services Assistant also being in place to make up the team.
- 8.2 The Elections Team has met all statutory requirements relating to electoral registration throughout the duration of the annual canvass and has undertaken this in the same manner and with the same resources as the previous year. It is not considered necessary to change the way in which the team undertakes the canvass, until such time as is required by a change in legislation, or commit any further resources to the team.

## 9. Strategic Objectives

### Reducing Inequality

- 9.1 All statutory requirements in relation to electoral registration are met by the team, which ensures that all people who are eligible are given the opportunity to register to vote.

## 10. Organisational Impacts

- 10.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

No implications.

- 10.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

No implications.

- 10.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

No implications.

## 11. Recommendation

- 11.1 That the report be noted.

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

**Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?** No

**How many appendices does the report contain?** None

**List of Background Papers:** None

**Lead Officer:** Graham Watts, Democratic Team Leader and  
Elections Manager  
Telephone (01522) 873439