



Scrutiny Committee
3rd November 2014

**Interim Report from the Head of
Policy and Scrutiny**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Promoting Electoral Engagement (IER) Task Group – Interim Report

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report brings to the Scrutiny Committee an interim report with findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee's task group investigation on how to promote electoral engagement in light of the change to Individual Electoral Registration (IER).
- 1.2 The task group was established because members were concerned about the transition to IER. The transition to IER has been described as the most significant change to the electoral system in the last 100 years. The IER system went live in July 2014 and is expected to fully supplant the current Household Electoral Registration system on 1st December 2015 with the aim of making the process of registration more convenient and secure.
- 1.3 More specifically, task group wanted to better understand the how the council, through the work of the Electoral Services and Communications Teams, was preparing for the changes.
- 1.4 Given the timeframe for both the rollout of IER and this task group's imminent report, it is hoped that the task group may assist in the rollout of IER by providing timely recommendations to improve outreach with residents.
- 1.5 As this is an interim report, there are a number of activities the task group would like to undertake, including taking further evidence from officers in health and public health as well as other work undertaken by local authorities to promote engagement.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 As this is an interim report, the Committee is not asked to agree the recommendations found in the interim report. However, the task group would welcome any comments and feedback from Committee members.

3.0 Details

- 3.1 IER is different from the current system in that it requires each person to register individually, instead of one person in a household supplying the details of everyone living at that address. Online registration will be available from the start of IER and it is hoped this will help everyone who is eligible to vote to have control over their process of registration. However, there is a risk that many may not transfer easily from the older system to IER and may be removed from the register in 2015.
- 3.2 This particular issue is important for Brent as there are certain groups that have been identified as being at risk of not being transferred onto the new electoral roll, these include:
- Young people turning 18;
 - Those aged 18 – 24 (including students);
 - Tenants in the private rented sector (PRS);
 - Postal voters;
 - People whose first language is not English; and
 - People with learning disabilities.
- 3.3 The over-arching purpose of the task group has been to ensure that all of Brent's residents are successfully transferred onto the new electoral roll. As such, the task group's intended outcomes are:
- To ensure that a clear and coherent strategy for promoting electoral engagement in the borough, with a particular focus on under-represented groups is developed;
 - Ensure that the Council and elected members are engaging with local communities around civic participation and voter registration
 - Harness the expertise of local CVS organisations to reach out to residents;
 - Ensure that most people in the borough are successfully transferred to the new system with a target rate of 95%; and
 - If possible, increase the number of local people on the electoral register.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Many of the financial implications connected with the developmental issues of the task group report have been addressed either through a Cabinet Office grant or through mainstream funding of the Electoral Services team.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The change to IER comes as result of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013. The Representation of the People Act 1983 requires councils in England and Wales to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer. The RPA 1983 also requires that the council's Electoral Registration Officer be responsible for compiling and maintain the council's electoral role and administering an annual canvass.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 As above, the community groups particularly at-risk are:
- Young people turning 18;
 - Those aged 18 – 24 (including students);
 - Tenants in the private rented sector (PRS);
 - Postal voters;
 - People whose first language is not English; and
 - People with learning disabilities.
- 6.2 Ensuring that these groups are engaged is at the core of this task group's recommendations.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 None

8.0 Contact Officers

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