



Waveney Electoral Services Team update

This newsletter brings you the latest information from the Electoral Services Team for 2014. In the coming months a huge change will take effect for the system used to register electors in England, Scotland and Wales, with a move to a new system of 'Individual Electoral Registration'. There have also been some changes made to election rules for this year's European elections which have a knock-on effect for Local Government elections from 22nd May onwards.

Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

A new system for registering voters will come into force this year on 10th June.

Individual Electoral Registration, or IER, will introduce a registration system where the individual has responsibility to ensure they are registered to vote, rather than the current household system that allows any member of a household to register the details for the whole household. The introduction of this new system will also enable voters to register online for the first time.

IER will develop in 3 main channels as it is rolled out, and we will be managing the transition and ensuring that our office procedures, our equipment and software are able to cope with the changes.

Online registration

The first impact of IER will be the unveiling of the new online registration site on 10th June. When this site goes live, customers will be able to go online to the 'gov.uk' website and register themselves for voting. To make the new system secure, each person wishing to register will have to provide their name, address, date of birth (DOB) and national insurance number (NINO) as part of the online registration process, and this information will be sent off electronically to be checked against other government records. If the person's identity can be verified using other government records, then their details will be sent through to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer so that their entry can be added to the Register.

The introduction of online registration will revolutionise the way people can register to vote and make it easier for people to have instant access to registration. We will be promoting the use of the online system as much as possible but there is of course still a paper-based system for those who do not have access to the internet or who prefer not to use it.

Confirmation Live Run (CLR)

To enable the transition to the new system of IER, all of the existing electors on the Register of Electors will have to be moved over from the current Register to a new copy of the Register. Before an elector can be moved across to the new copy their details must be checked and verified against government records in a similar way that a new application online will be checked, except as our records do not currently contain a DOB or NINO, the check will only be made against the name and address. A 'dry-run' of this process was carried out in 2013 so that the system could be checked, and the 'live run' will now take place over the months of June and July 2014.

Every Council will be sending their entire Register of Electors off for checking, and then receiving the Register data back into their software with each elector marked as either a 'Red' or 'Green' match against the government database. A 'Green' match means the elector's details were able to be confirmed against the government database and they can therefore be carried straight over to the new IER Register. A 'Red' match means their details did not

match against the government database and we will have to make contact with them individually to obtain further information before we can add them to the new Register.

Every authority in the country has been allocated a date to send their Register off for matching, and Waveney's date is 11th July. The matching process should take approximately a week and then we will receive the information back into our system.

Once this part of the process has taken place we will begin local data-matching against Council records to see if we can turn any of our 'Red' matches to 'Green', and then from the beginning/middle of August we will embark on the process of contacting all of our 'Red' matches to invite them to provide their DOB and NINO so that we can attempt to verify them.

We will also at this time be writing out to 6,000 properties, currently marked where no one registered to vote, with a 'Household Enquiry Form' (HEF) asking them to provide details of the residents at the property so that we can invite the occupants to register, we will be writing to our large number of care homes and HMO's to register the residents of those properties, and we will be sending a confirmation letter to all of our 'Green' matches to inform them that they do not need to take any action and their details will be included in the new Register.

We will certainly have our hands full!

Spreading the word about IER

The Electoral Commission will be running a campaign to advertise the move to IER from 1st July to the 8th August. We will be using their resources and promoting the message they send out at that time. It is important to note however that we cannot send out any new IER forms or letters of confirmation in Waveney until we have sent off our data on 11th July, received it back, carried out our local data-matching and then sent off the data for the forms/letters to be printed and dispatched. We estimate that residents in Waveney will receive their first communications from us locally around middle August, after the Electoral Commission's campaign has finished, but we will carry out our own campaign locally with the relevant information and dates for residents of Waveney. There is a strong likelihood that residents will see the EC campaign and query why they have not heard anything about it from us, but our hands are tied in this respect to the date we have been allocated by the Cabinet Office, as dates were allocated based on the most transient populations within an authority area being allocated the earlier dates. Also from the 10th June the Edited Register, which is the version of the Register that can be bought and sold and people choose whether or not to be included, will become legally known as the 'Open Register'.

We are working with teams from across the Council to make use of existing channels of contact with electors and maximise the number of people we can reach in the District area to spread information about IER. We'll be using many different methods of getting information out so that we can give both general information to the wider population in the District as well as targeted information to reach the traditionally hard-to-reach groups.

Changes to Election Law for 2014

A number of changes have been made to Election Law which will take effect for the European Parliamentary Election and any other elections that take place that have a polling day including and from 22nd May 2014.

- Deadline for receipt of nominations – the deadline for receipt of nominations has been changed from 12 midday to 4pm on the 19th working day before the date of the poll.
- Deadline for withdrawal of candidature – this deadline was previously 3 working days after the receipt of nominations but will now be at the same time as the deadline for receipt of nominations at 4pm on the 19th working day before the date of the poll. This is important to note as previously, once all nominations had been received, there was a grace period for candidates to change their mind and withdraw. This grace period has now been removed meaning a candidate wishing to withdraw must do so by the deadline for nominations and, once this has passed, they have no opportunity to change their mind. We cannot release

information of the number of nominations we have received or the names of the people that are standing until the deadline has passed so those wishing to stand must be sure of their commitment.

- Deadline for notice of appointment of election agent (District Council elections and above only) – along with the change to the withdrawal deadline, this deadline has also been aligned to be 4pm on the 19th working day before the date of the poll.
- Deadline for publication of statement of persons nominated – this deadline has been changed so that publication of the notice will now be required by 4pm on the 18th working day before the date of the poll.
- Minor amendments to the ‘consent to nomination’ form
- Requirement for nomination papers to be delivered by hand to the Returning Officer’s address.
- Provision to allow voters who are, at 10pm, either in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station for the purpose of voting, to be issued with a ballot paper. This means that the poll will not close at 10pm in areas where there is a queue at the polling station at 10pm, and staff will have to remain issuing ballot papers until the queue has been seen to. This only applies to voters who are in the polling station or already in a queue outside the polling station at 10pm, and not those who join the queue after 10pm.
- Provisions allowing postal ballot packs to be issued as soon as practicable after the deadline for withdrawals of candidature. In practical terms this provision is dependant on the turn around of data, print suppliers deadlines and contracted dates for printing.
- Extension of the emergency proxy provisions to people whose occupation, service or employment means they cannot go to the polling station in person. Note however that, as before, emergency proxy arrangements may only be granted where the circumstances of the applicant changed after the deadline for an ordinary proxy arrangement. If the applicant was aware of their circumstances before the ordinary proxy application deadline then it is deemed that they should have applied at that time for an ordinary arrangement and they are not eligible to apply for an emergency arrangement.

Unless a by-election is held for your Parish/Town Council, these changes will not have affect until the scheduled elections on 7th May 2015. We will write to all Clerks in advance of those elections with a reminder of the process for nominations, the relevant deadline involved and the information for prospective candidates.

If you have any questions at any time please do not hesitate to contact our team. The primary contact for Parish/Town Council matters is Kelly Wigley on 01502 523618, or alternatively call 01502 523238 and another member of the team will deal with your enquiry.

The future is ever changing and ever demanding in the world of Electoral Services, however this Newsletter I hope will keep you informed.

Many thanks

Sharon Shand, Electoral Services Manager

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