



ELECTORAL SERVICES

ANNUAL CANVASS PLAN

Introduction

The Electoral Services Team comprises one full-time and two part-time staff. The optimum number of canvassers is 14 recruited to assist with the household canvass in 2008 but not in 2009 due to Royal Mail strikes adversely affecting canvass response levels and the canvass annual budget provision.

The service has contracts with Electoral Reform Services, Halarose of Oxford Software Systems (Soon to be changed to Xpress Electoral Software Systems) and FDML Printing to support this work. In addition, it receives support services from the Council's legal team, IT Services and other Council departments regularly consulting the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators utilising guidance manuals and regional officers for advice on various issues.

The annual canvass of every household from September until November remains the cornerstone of the service when compiling the electoral register this document underpinning the entire electoral process.

The canvass is conducted in accordance Section 9A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and places a duty on the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to 'take all steps that are necessary for the purpose of complying with his duty to maintain the registers'; the steps include:

- sending more than once to any address the form to be used for the canvass,
- making on one or more occasions house to house inquiries,
- making contact by such other means as is thought appropriate,
- inspecting other council records and
- Providing training to persons in the ERO's employ.

The qualifications to be registered are outlined in Sections 1-7C of this Act , together with Sections 1-4 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (covering overseas electors).

Our Goals

Our primary goal is that our annual canvass of households should be as comprehensive and accurate as is practicably possible;
We also aim to ensure that we meet all our statutory obligations to publish and supply the new register at the required statutory date.

Objectives, Controls and Measures

Objectives	Controls
Office Working Practice	
To have a clear project plan, with a timetable of activities, supporting documentation and notes showing the procedures that need to be followed through the annual canvass	A project plan is compiled each year reviewed regularly by the Electoral Services team
To be clear and consistent in our database and system preparation	The project plan coupled with the software help pages and flowcharts provide guidance on systems preparation
To maintain the highest levels of accuracy when scanning forms and inputting data	There are well laid out controls that cover scanning and inputting within the project plan. All data inputted is double checked before it is formally published with inputting and checking always undertaken by different members of staff and formally signed off at each stage.
To statistical monitor the canvass, including success measures, electorate statistics and follow-up postal voting form issue and returned data	Statistics are recorded throughout the three stage process and the final publication figures along with monthly statistics recorded from December to September
To monitor our canvass activity, in particular, the number of registrations that are made and reasons forms have been returned	All figures are recorded by the number of avenues available e.g. telephone, internet, SMS, C/tax, Royal Mail etc with these broken down into the number of registration forms that are returned at the different issue stages and where applicable the number of personal contacts made by canvassers. We also receive comments from residents using the internet service and these are also recorded.
Recruiting and Training Staff	
To ensure that we have an open, fair and effective canvasser recruitment	As detailed in the recruitment plan
To provide each canvasser with guidance that outlines their duties, how to undertake the role and address health and safety issues that might arise	A Canvasser's guidance pack is produced along with formal training and feedback from previous years.
To provide each canvasser with a training session	A formal training session is provided each year.

To ensure that each canvasser has the necessary support that they may need during the canvass period	The canvasser's guidance includes officers contact information, including out of office hours contact telephone numbers for Safer Runnymede.
To ensure that each canvasser is fully aware of and briefed on health and safety issues	<p>The Canvasser's guidance includes extracts from the relevant corporate policies: notably, Lone Working, Manual Handling, Personal Health and Safety, and Accident Reporting.</p> <p>The guidance also includes a wide variety of common sense tips drawn from experienced canvassers and comments collated over the years from other departments re access, safety issues etc</p> <p>The guidance is reviewed each year.</p>
Resources and Stationery	
To review each year the design of the canvass form and other stationery	Regular team meetings monitor stationery used and we welcome feedback from members of the public, staff and canvassers. We also receive comments from equalities groups that are taken on board
To meet all key target dates re proofing initial stationery, the completion of production and delivery of stationery, and that data is proof checked before personalisation.	The project plan is intended to ensure that these key dates are met
To provide appropriate translation support	See the accessibility plan
To be able to supply a large version, a CD version and a Braille version of Form A	We invariably refer queries of this nature to the Electoral Commission who supply these documents on request
Contracts and Support	
To ensure that we fully document ERS procedures concerning the exchange of data relating to internet and telephone registration	ERS e-mails are retained and the project plan incorporates all the key procedures for exchanging data with ERS securely through their web portal
To fully document the software procedures concerning the canvass	System updates are actioned at the earliest opportunity; release notes are retained and circulated, and the project plan incorporates all the key procedures for managing the Canvass
To ensure FDML has good forward planning to enable them to deliver their role in the proof and production of the canvass form and associated stationery	Continuous liaison with FDML is maintained to ensure the design, proof and production timetable is adhered to.

To ensure that the Royal Mail has good forward planning to enable them to deliver their key role in the delivery of the various stages of the canvass e.g. licences, dockets, walksort etc	Communication is maintained with Royal Mail and FDML so that handover of forms is agreed and deadlines realistic. Royal Mail have a designated count manager (Maria Bates) who is contacted at each stage to ensure deadlines are met
Meeting our legal duties to 'take all steps that are necessary'	
To monitor and support our canvassers	This matter is dealt with above under our objectives with regard to Office Working Practice and Recruiting and Training Staff
To review void properties	Void properties reports are received from Revenues and Benefits are checked and actioned appropriately.
To check other council records	Our Policy on consulting other council records supports us in this work
To ensure that all our electors who have requested a postal voting application and who have a marker against their entry receive the relevant form at the earliest opportunity	The Project plan includes provision for this work
To ensure that all our European Union citizens who have a G marker against their entry receive form UC1 when applicable	The Project plan includes provision for this work
To ensure all residents resident in residential/care homes are registered correctly.	All homes/establishments are provided with a pre populated personalised canvass letter along with a supply of rolling registration forms throughout the year. These are accompanied with guidance notes on how to complete and access the web site if more convenient. A specific file relating to establishments is kept and maintained with personal contacts recorded at each residence.
To ensure that all those entitled to be registered who are members of the armed services are provided with the opportunity to register	Service personnel have proved difficult to register despite contact with those allocated by HM Services to assist us. In fact this has in itself proved difficult to establish and maintain. A recent EC program resulted in an additional service voter in the area being registered.(One!!)
To ensure all eligible students are registered	This is essentially Royal Holloway who provides appropriate data sets each year. We also e-mail all students prior to elections and it is proposed to improve the relationship by visiting the University more regularly than is being carried out at the moment. Students are proving more problematic to register particularly with a greater number now living off campus and this is an area that will need reviewing this year and it is proposed to meet with staff at the university to ascertain a method of identifying these students.
To ensure that every home mover is contacted and supplied with a rolling registration form with their Council home mover pack even during the canvass	All new bills sent out with C/Tax also a rolling registration form enclosed with the documentation this coloured pink to make it conspicuous. We also collate information for the EC re their home mover exercise each year.

Maintaining Accuracy and Integrity

To maintain the highest levels of accuracy when scanning and data inputting	The controls that cover scanning and inputting are detailed in our project plan. The principle here is data is always double checked with inputting and checking always undertaken by different members of staff
To conduct appropriate audit checks of properties with more than a set number of electors	Reports can be run identifying where this occurs and if necessary reviews undertaken. The number can be increased or decreased dependent on the circumstances. (this will need to be reviewed on receipt of the new software)
Duplicate entries are identified during the additions and deletions process and are actioned	A report can be run identifying where this occurs and if necessary action taken.
Absent voters who are found to have changed their name during the canvass registration are provided with a new application to enable them to register new personal identifiers	Automatically flagged by the system once a modification is completed and letter sent out

Publication and lists

To publish the Register on time	The statutory date is 1 December each year
To supply and sell the Register to those persons that are authorised to receive it	We retain a list of those that are authorised to receive the register, either by free supply or sale and record when registers are delivered. Circulation of the register is detailed in comprehensive detail in section 4 of EC guidance. http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/57931/Part-H-Access-and-supply-August-2009.pdf
To supply the Surrey Archivist with the up to date register	The Surrey Archivist retains all registers published making these available for inspection after a period of 10 years. The only register available at the Civic Centre is the current register. http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/Surrey+History+Centre?opendocument

Statistical follow up

To produce comprehensive response data	Produced from the software
To produce canvasser data	Produced from the software
To run off ERS telephone and internet response data	This data is supplied by ERS and is retained each year
To produce RPF 29 data and to submit this at the earliest opportunity and within the deadlines set	This data is retained each year
To complete the EC performance standards and return at the earliest opportunity and within the deadlines set	This data is retained each year (Submitted this year and now subject to verification by the Electoral Commission for 13 January 2010)

Follow up action and legal support

To update at an early opportunity our website

Completed by Clare Harris and Sam Clifton

Procedural notes for those wanting to make an objection or for those requesting a hearing of an application or objection are maintained

Software procedures adhered to