

ELECTORAL SERVICES CONSULTING OTHER COUNCIL RECORDS

Introduction

The Electoral Registration Officer is authorised, by Regulation 35 of the Representation of the People Regulations 2001, to inspect, for the purposes of his registration duties, records kept in whatever form by the Council, any registrar of births and deaths, any person, including a company or organisation, providing services to or authorised to exercise any function of the Council.

He is entitled to make copies of any such information.

Failure to supply such information may lead to a fine of £1,000; the return of false information may result in a prison sentence and/or a fine of £5,000.

Data Protection Act 1998

The Electoral Commission has sought the advice of the Information Commissioner's Office on whether there is a conflict between these powers and provisions in the Data Protection Act.

The advice is that, as the Electoral Registration Officer has a legal duty to inspect local authority records for the purposes of maintaining the Electoral Register, local authorities are therefore under a legal duty to disclose the information requested by the Electoral Registration Officer, and the Data Protection Act 1998 "will not act as a barrier" to the disclosure of the required information.

The Information Commissioner's full advice can be found on page 3, Part E of Managing Electoral Registration.

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/electoral_commission_pdf_file/0010/43957/Part-E-Improving-completeness-and-accuracy-August-2009.pdf

Protocol on consulting data

General protocols:

- Personal data that is obtained from a third party should be cross-checked where possible in order to validate it;
- Personal data that is obtained from a third party, whether in electronic or in hard copy format, is only retained by the office for a maximum of two years (the currency of the present register and one year ahead);
- Where an update is made in the Register on the basis of personal data that is obtained from a third party, a house note showing the source of that data and the date of the update is made so that there is an information audit trail.

More detailed considerations:

Electoral Registration accuracy requirements are very high and specific.

Personal data that is obtained from a third party may not be adequate in itself or sufficiently accurate to permit an update to the Electoral Register to be made e.g. the nationality of residents may not be shown; names may be miss-spelt; the person shown in the data may be the

owner of the property as opposed to an occupier of a property; the list of occupiers at a property may be incomplete, or occupancy of a property may have taken place well before it is listed / mapped.

Caution is therefore required.

Some data is more accurate than others, and the following table considers a “hierarchy of accuracy” and appropriate responses to the data that we have access to.

Records checked

Record	How often is it checked?	Custodian / Contact details
Register of licences granted for Houses in Multiple Occupancy under the Housing Act 2004	During the canvass period as an aid to the canvassers (the register was not required in 2009 canvass)	Kuda Magorimbo 01932 425888
Council Tax – Valuation Office Lists of New properties	On a regular basis as it is published by Council Tax	Cyd Sefton 01932 425410
Building Control – Completion lists	As published by Building Control	Sue Lynch 01932 425135
Local Land and Property Gazetteer	Compliance to be achieved by December 2009 – delayed until transition to Xpress software completed	Daphne Evans 01932 5282
GIS	On a regular basis – the map database is available to all Electoral Services staff	Daphne Evans 01932 5282
Royal Mail – Annual Postcode Updates	Regular walk sort downloads via the software system	Download from software company or direct from www.royalmail.com/postcodeupdates
Council Tax list of Void Properties – 15 th October	Shortly after 15 th October during the annual canvass	Cyd Sefton 01932 425410
Registrations of deaths	On a frequent basis from the registrar	Mandy Cooper 01932 5417
Royal Holloway University of London	In November each year as part of the annual canvass	alison.marsh@rhul.ac.uk
List of Residential and Care Homes	During June and October each year in preparation for and during the annual canvass	Erica Philpot 01932 425964
Council Tax Database	On a regular basis – the database is available to all Electoral Services staff	Web based software (Password protected)

Record	Strengths or Deficiencies in the Data	Appropriate Action
Register of licences granted for Houses in Multiple Occupancy under the Housing Act 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The list comprises details of landlords and tenants and is compulsory • Age and nationality are not collected • Occupants are subject to quick turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the list as a guide for canvassers • The lists may be used to classify properties • The lists are not used to add electors but enables the service to contact them direct
Council Tax – Valuation Office Lists of New properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data may lag behind occupancy • The data may equally be well in advance of occupancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lists are used to check the property database • The lists are not used on their own to add properties to the database • The lists will be superseded by LLPG compliance
Building Control / NHBC – Completion lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data may lag behind occupancy • The data may equally be well in advance of occupancy • The data covers all types of property and so must be searched carefully to find residential new builds and conversions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lists are used to check the property database • The lists are not used on their own to add properties to the database • The lists will be superseded by LLPG compliance
Local Land and Property Gazetteer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the corporate LLPG will be attained in November 2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular downloads will become the main source for the property database through a direct LLPG interface with the software. • We will retain the ability to add or delete properties from the Register of Electors without LLPG clearance so that we can meet our obligations for dealing with applications to be added to a register for an election
GIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maps have very high accuracy levels and are up-dated regularly • All PD and electoral area data is now captured onto GIS with polling stations marked • http://maps.runnymede.gov.uk/website/Elections/disclaimer.htm • The address point facility is used to validate the postal address of properties on the map and to ensure that a property is in the correct polling district • The UPRN is used as a common point of reference between the maps and the register of electors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIS maps can only be regarded as a checking and validation tool

Royal Mail – Regular Postcode and Walksort Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no perceived deficiencies, although electors sometimes claim that the post-code they use is at variance with the Royal Mail version 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lists are used to maintain the property database The lists will be superseded by LLPG compliance
Council Tax list of Void Properties – 15 th October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no perceived deficiencies but you need to be careful if deleting electors with an appropriate audit trail recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The list is used to delete electors from properties where no response has been received at this data
Registrations of deaths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived deficiencies do exist but these are not serious. The data is dependent on the person registering a death: name and address details may contain small variances Households have been encountered where two electors share near identical names 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The list is used to delete electors from properties This use of the list is supported by a printed check list
List of Residential and Care Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no perceived deficiencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The list is used to contact residential and care homes to enable a more directed canvass The lists may be used to classify properties
Council Tax Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nationality is not collected In some cases, an account holder may not at first sight be the occupier, although careful examination of the account history will show who is an owner as opposed to the occupier Single person occupancy is shown Lists of previous account holders are shown to help confirm occupation history Occupancy dates are shown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used to support our property database work, particularly as it shows that a property has residents used to confirm a “no-change” status during the canvass used to confirm that a property is unoccupied where no response has otherwise been had and electors are deleted on this basis during the canvass used to support the registration process particularly as a check on other data used for verifying application details used for verifying application details that include dates of birth used at the end of the annual canvass period for adding details of electors to the register where it is considered that the data for a property is complete and complies with ER accuracy requirements – a house note to this effect is made no action is taken where it is not clear if there are other occupiers in addition to the account holder

Becoming LLPG Compliant

The government has made a direction under Section 52(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 that from 1 December 2009, Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain must ensure that any electoral registration data held on electronic systems is formatted in compliance with a national standard.

The first stage of this compliance is that the address database of the electoral register must be matched with the Authority Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), and the government has provided funding of **£5818** towards this work.

This compliance has been delayed until the transition to Xpress software take place in 2010.

Too date, there have been four stages:

Stage 1	First software data matching exercise between the Authority LLPG and the Electoral Register property database, followed up by manual matching of those unmatched properties or those with queries.
Stage 2	Further matching work between the two databases, identification of missed properties on databases, visits and inspections and finalising the match between both databases.
Stage 3 - delay	With the transition to new software Xpress a decision has been made to put the process on hold this exacerbated by problems reported from our existing software supplier with the download from Intelligent addressing
Stage 3	Once the Xpress system is up and running we will take the updated file from Intelligent Addressing and load this into the system. This will enable us to set up the automatic LLPG interface and take properties directly from the NLPG and cleanse the data using the mapping systems

Eventual compliance at Stage 2 will ensure that the Electoral Registration Officer attains Levels 3 and 4 of the Electoral Commission's Performance Standard 2 for Electoral Registration Officers.

It is hoped that the LLPG will be up and running from the end of January 2010.

Housing Association Records

The Electoral Services Section has not accessed the records of housing associations operating in the Borough too date.

It is considered that the records held by these associations might be helpful as a final check on non-responding properties during the canvass period, especially flats.

Evaluation of our policy

The evaluation of our policy will take place with the following topics considered:

- Is our list of other records adequate and up to date?
- Have we encountered any resistance from suppliers based on a misinterpretation of the Data Protection Act?
- What Electoral Commission Circulars if any have been issued during the past year that is relevant to our policy?
- Have our protocols been workable, and have they enhanced the accuracy of the register?
- How will our intended achievement of LLPG compliance alter our source list?
- Have we met our general protocols?
- Is our “hierarchy of accuracy” and appropriate actions table comprehensive, accurate and workable?