

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 10th November 2014

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Title of Report: Individual Electoral Registration - Update

Summary

Purpose of report: To update the Committee on progress to implement Individual Electoral Registration in Oxford.

Key decision: No

Executive lead member: Councillor Price

Report author: Martin John

Policy Framework: n/a

Background

At its meeting on 3rd December 2013 the Scrutiny Committee requested a report to update it on the work being undertaken to successfully implement Individual Electoral Registration in Oxford.

What action have we taken?

Phase one: July – October 2104

1. Electoral Services and the Communications team implemented a local advertising campaign which ran alongside the national campaign run by the Electoral Commission.
2. This included designing and the distributing leaflets and posters to a wide range of partner organisations, bus stop and sides of bus

advertising, a banner ad on the Oxford Mail and Times website, etc.. This campaign cost around £12,000 but we reached agreement with the other districts in Oxfordshire and shared the costs between us.

Phase two: September – December 2014

3. Most of the focus in the summer/autumn has been on students both because they are a large percentage of potential electors and they are less likely to register themselves under the new system.
4. We have been in contact with University representatives since summer 2013 and with both student unions.
5. The Universities provide us with lists of students resident in halls. This information can no longer be used to place them on the register – we must contact each student and ask them to register individually. We have:
 - sent an ITR to every student;
 - worked with the universities and colleges on the best way to reach and remind students;
 - work with Students' Unions and National Union of Students to raise awareness, including via student societies;
 - promote IER at registration events during Freshers' and 'returners' weeks;

Partnership working

6. We are working with internal partners (e.g. CAN team, Tenant involvement, Customer Contact Centre) using their contacts and channels of communication to extend our community reach.
7. We are using these and other contacts to build relationships with community groups and voluntary organisations to promote IER to hard-to-reach groups, new residents, home movers and vulnerable groups.
8. We will visit community events, residential care homes, advice centres and family centres. We are working with local schools and colleges and are planning to participate in CANs Schools Democracy Roadshow later this year.
9. We have also worked with councillors asking them to identify 'hard to reach' groups in their wards, or groups of electors they felt were at risk of being excluded or under-represented.

10. After the publication of the register on 30th November we will continue to work to identify potential electors and get them registered. We are investigating the possibility of carrying out a “mini-canvass” in early spring in order to make sure that the register is accurate as possible as we move towards the 2015 General election in May.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments.

Name and contact details of author:-

Name: Martin John

Job title: Electoral Services Manager

Service Area: Law and Governance

Tel: 01865 252518 e-mail: mjohn@oxford.gov.uk
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List of background papers: *None*

Version number: 1

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