

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**18 JULY 2019**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET INFORMATION ITEM**

**Leader - Councillor Bob Cook**

**CANVASS REFORM**

**SUMMARY**

On 12 March 2019, the Cabinet Office published an interim statement of policy regarding reform of the canvass. The Government will be amending legislation governing the annual canvass with canvass reform implemented from the start of the 2020 annual canvass. This report sets out existing and new arrangements and the implications of the changes.

**REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

To provide an update on canvass reform.

**DETAIL**

1. On 12 March 2019, the Cabinet Office published an interim statement of policy regarding reform of the canvass.

**Existing Arrangements**

2. The current canvass gathers information on potential additions and changes to, and deletions from, the register. Since the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in 2014, further action is required to convert this information into actual changes. The annual canvass is therefore no longer a registration process in itself, although it forms part of Electoral Registration Officers' (EROs') wider registration duties. EROs must individually invite potential new electors to apply to register, and verify their identity, before they can be added to the register.
3. While the current canvass is effective overall in meeting its objectives, it is widely recognised to be outdated and cumbersome. The one-size-fits-all approach, incorporating numerous prescribed steps, takes little account of differences within and between registration areas. It is heavily paper based, expensive, complex to administer and stifles innovation. It is also clear that the current process leads to confusion for the citizen.
4. The purpose of the canvass is to identify everyone who should be on the electoral register. This means identifying citizens who should be registered but are currently not, as well as identifying electors who are no longer at a property and should therefore be removed from the register. A revised version of the electoral register must be published by 1 December, following the conclusion of the annual canvass.

## Canvass Pilots

5. Pilots of alternative models for conducting the annual canvass were carried out in 2016 and 2017. From the evaluation of the pilots it was clear that there was merit in enabling EROs to more effectively target their resources towards those properties where the occupiers have changed and the electoral register needs to be updated.
6. As a result, the Government will be amending legislation governing the annual canvass during 2019 with canvass reform implemented from the start of the 2020 annual canvass. The objectives of canvass reform are:
  - to make the process simpler and clearer for citizens;
  - for EROs to have greater discretion to run a tailored canvass which better suits their local area;
  - to reduce the administrative burden on EROs and the financial burden on taxpayers;
  - to safeguard the completeness and accuracy of the registers;
  - to maintain the security and integrity of the registers; and
  - to include the capacity for innovation and improvement, with a model that is adaptable to future change.

## New Canvass Arrangements

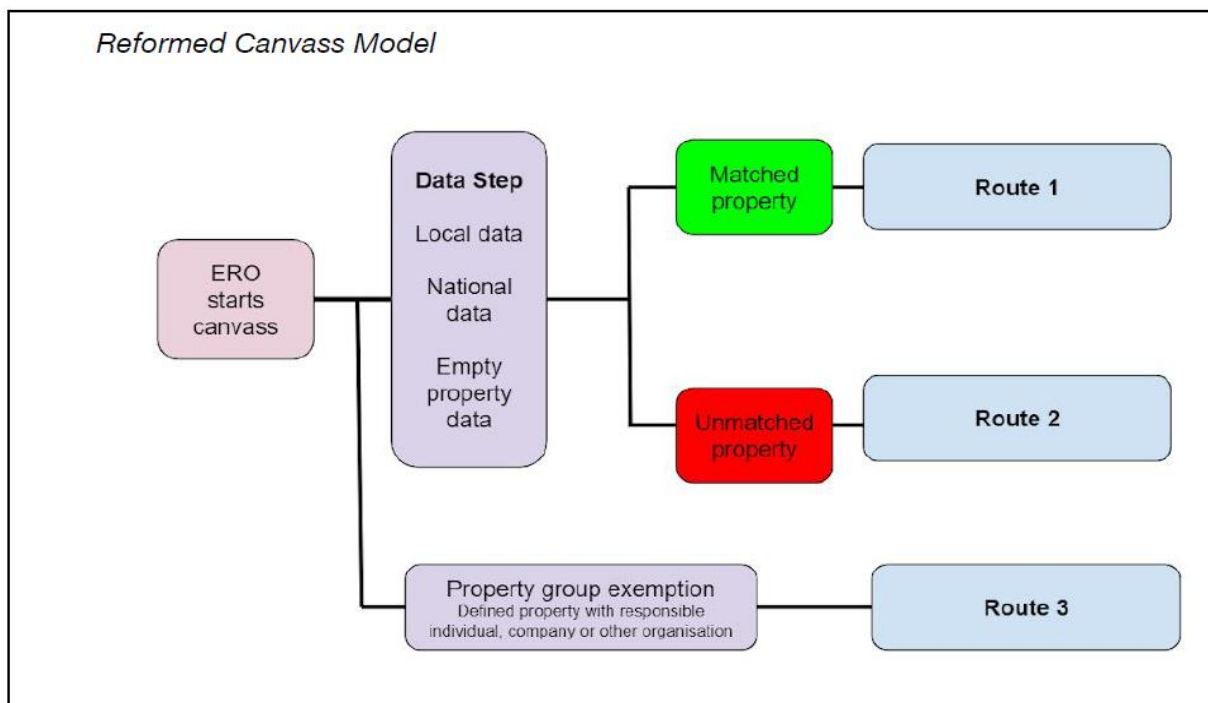
7. The new canvass will incorporate a 'data step' at the outset of the process. This will inform the ERO which properties are likely to have not changed household composition, based on matching their data on registered electors against national Government data and, where relevant, locally held data sources.
8. The ERO will then follow one of two routes for each property:
  - Route 1, for properties where the data suggests no change in household composition
  - Route 2 for properties where the data matching highlights that there may be a change to the information the ERO currently holds for the property.
9. A third route, Route 3, will be available for property types which do not fit clearly within Routes 1 and 2. The characteristics of these property types mean that the ERO can more effectively and efficiently obtain information on residents using an alternative approach. Route 3 will be identified at the start of the canvass process and will be exempted from the data step.
10. EROs will have the discretion to match the data they hold on registered electors against local datasets

## Data Step

11. All EROs in Great Britain will be required to send specified information they hold on registered electors or attainers (i.e. including 16-17 year olds). The data will be sent via the Individual Electoral Registration Digital Service (IER DS) and matched against data held by the DWP. The process will be completed by the DWP with the IER DS used as a secure conduit to transmit the ERO's data to the DWP and, subsequently, to allow EROs to retrieve their DWP data matching results.
12. Exclusions from the data match step include the following circumstances
  - where an elector has made a recent successful application (within a maximum of 90 calendar days prior to the data match). DWP are likely to be less up to date than the electoral register

- discretion to exclude certain property types e.g. care homes

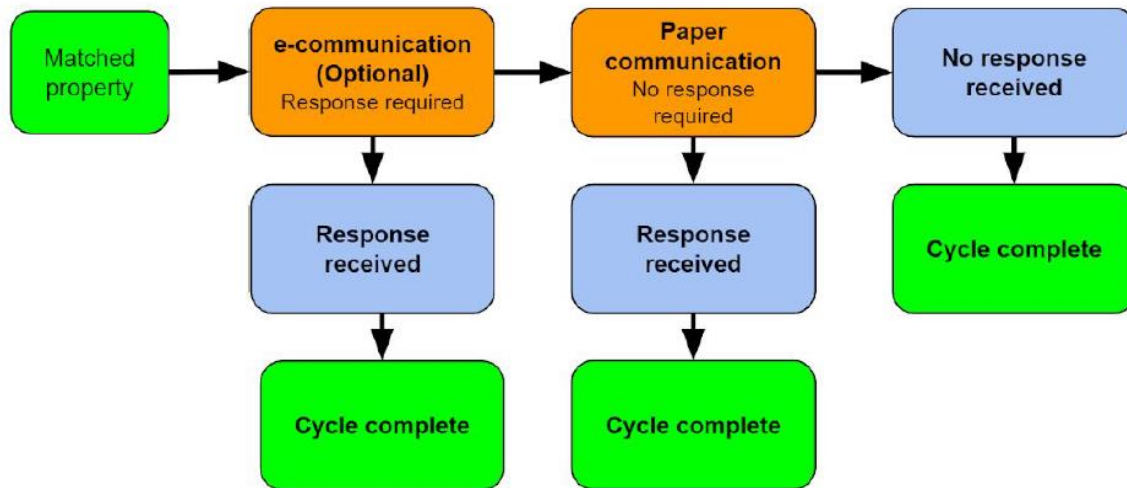
- For a property to be designated as 'matched', all the electors registered at the address will need to be matched at the individual level against either (or both) national or local data.
- For properties that have been 100% matched at the individual level, the ERO can (but will not be required to) follow the less intensive Route 1 process. For properties where some, or all, of the registered occupants are unmatched, EROs must follow the more intensive Route 2 process. In this way, the data matching helps the ERO determine which properties go through a less expensive and less resource intensive process (Route 1), and which properties must go through a full canvass process (Route 2). This is illustrated in the table below.



### Route 1 – The Lighter Touch Route

- There will be two options available to EROs: either to send a single prescribed written communication to the property, or to first send an e-communication and then follow up with the prescribed written communication to the property where there is no response. The e-communication will be entirely optional. Although occupiers will be obliged to let EROs know if the information presented in the communication is inaccurate or incomplete, there will be no requirement for them to respond to a paper canvass communication where they have no change to report.

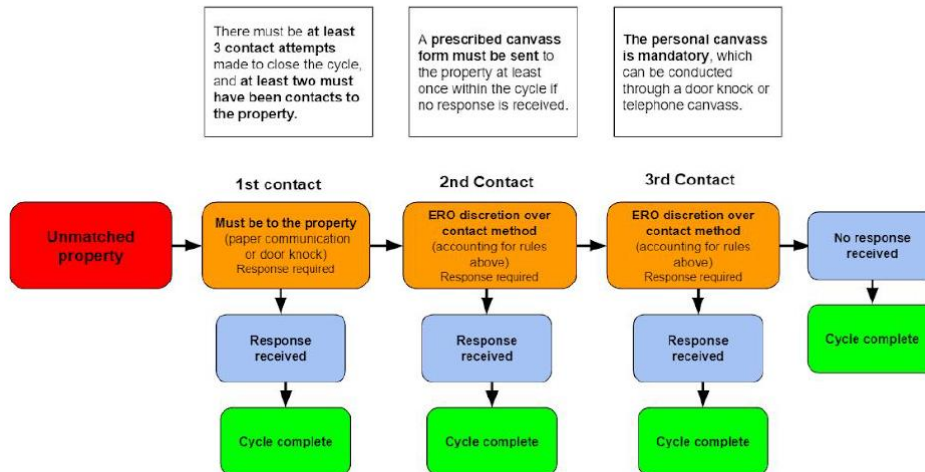
## Route 1 - The Lighter Touch Route



### Route 2 – The Full Canvass

16. Route 2 will be similar to the current canvass process which is followed for all households. Nationally, the Government anticipate that approximately a quarter of all households will need to go down the Route 2 process, although this will vary considerably from one area to another. A minimum of three contact attempts are required including a personal visit.

### Route 2 - The “Full” Canvass

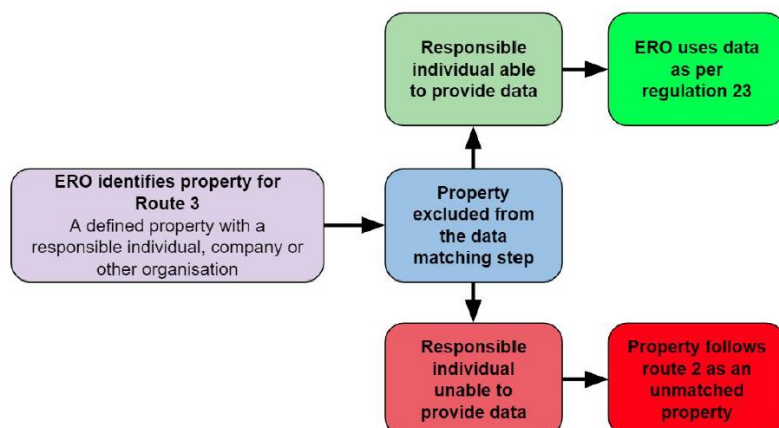


### Route 3 – The Exemptions Process

17. Route 3 will be triggered where the property in question meets one of the characteristics of a relevant property *and* EROs have successfully identified a responsible person who lawfully holds information on the residents of the property. Examples of those that will be eligible for the Route 3 process:

- Registered residential care homes (incorporating assisted living accommodation)
- HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) registered with the Local Authority
- Student residences
- Hostels

## Route 3 - The Exemptions Process



### Impact of Changes

18. There will be significant impact on our business processes and updates required to our Electoral Management Software.
19. There will also need to be consideration of how the changes might impact on registration levels. For example, it is anticipated that attainer registration will dip as a result of the changes. The resources that are freed up as part of canvass reform will need to be re-directed not only to non-matched properties but also to boost registration levels in under-registered groups.
20. In advance of canvass reform, it is essential that all UPRNs are up to date in the electoral register. The electoral team regularly update this information. In addition, property data has been sent to GIS team for matching against ONS records. Any anomalies will be investigated and corrected. This exercise will ensure that all properties are in their correct polling district ahead of sending data for matching.
21. Other activities include cleansing of data (including the deletion of outdated potential and pending electors), reviewing data sharing agreements with local data holders, the identification of properties that will be canvassed under Route 3 and determining the timescale for electors to be excluded from the data match step where they have recently registered.

### Assistant Director Administration, Democratic and Electoral Services

**Name of Contact Officer:** Margaret Waggott  
**Telephone No:** 01642 527064  
**Email Address:** [margaret.waggott@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:margaret.waggott@stockton.gov.uk)