

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

Decision Made: 14 October 2011

RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER ON INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

Issue for Decision

To consider the draft response to the Government Consultation Paper on Individual Electoral Registration.

Decision Made

That the draft response to the Government Consultation Paper on Individual Electoral Registration as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Democratic Services be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

Currently the system of registering to vote is undertaken by an annual canvass, at which point a registration form is sent to each household and one individual in each household takes responsibility for its completion and return. This system has been in place for over 100 years and has a potential for fraud as the information supplied has no corroborating evidence like a signature, National Insurance Number (NINO) or date of birth (DoB). Therefore, the Electoral Commission and others have been pushing for change. As a result the previous Government had agreed to introduce individual electoral registration but intended first introducing it on a voluntary basis before making it compulsory. The new Coalition Government agreed to bring forward the program and make it compulsory from the outset and have decided to introduce the new system in 2014 so it is in place for the 2015 General Election. The strength of this system is that each individual takes responsibility for their entries and the proposed new system has introduced corroborating evidence such as the NINO and DoB. A White Paper setting out the draft legislation and the proposals for individual electoral registration has been issued and comments have been sought from relevant bodies. The White Paper was attached at Appendix B to the report of the Head of Democratic Services and a draft response to the proposals was attached at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Democratic Services.

The response supports the principle of the introduction of individual electoral registration but expresses concerns over a number of technical issues, such as there being no need for a signature. Concern was also

expressed about the potential loss of electors registered to vote which is felt would be a minimum of 10%.

Additionally, like any new legislation, there will be a financial impact from the introduction of such a proposal and the Government in the Paper have indicated that they will provide an additional £85m in the spending review settlement 2014 – 2015 to fund registration officers to make contact with each potential elector individually inviting them to register. Additionally, the Government will provide ongoing additional registration costs of £31.8m after the first year as the work required in future years is less than the first year.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

The Council could decide to not put its comments in relation to the changes on the introduction of individual electoral registration, but to do so would not give the Council an opportunity to influence changes to the proposed legislation.

Background Papers

None

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 21 October 2011
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