

Committee General Purposes Committee	Date 13 October 2011	Classification Unrestricted	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) Originating Officer(s): Isabella Freeman		Title: CABINET OFFICE – DATA MATCHING 2011 Ward(s) affected: All		

REASONS FOR LATENESS AND URGENCY: This report was not circulated with the Committee agenda as information required to complete the report was not available at that time. The report is nevertheless recommended for consideration at this meeting to ensure timely information to Councillors on the data matching pilot exercise.

SUMMARY

1. Tower Hamlets chose the whole borough to trial the data matching process.
2. Following receipt of the initial data set from DWP, where there were more than 500,000 records returned, we asked for a further match to take place with matching currency of the records to be reduced to 2 years (in line with the life of the Register). This resulted in a reduction of around 100,000 records.
3. The results of the further match with DWP were as follows:
 - 24,675 DWP records where the names on the DWP database match with a void ERO property. These matches were conducted by our software supplier, who came to our offices on two occasions to conduct additional matches for us. These records have all been loaded into our software system and we will monitor the responses throughout the canvass period. If, towards the end of October, we have not received a response from the property, we will write out to the named individual and ask them to confirm their residency. The letter will confirm we are conducting a pilot for the Cabinet Office and have received information from a Government database that does not match records held on our current Register.
 - 83,783 ERO records that have not been matched against the DWP database records. Again, we have loaded all of these records into our

software system and will monitor the response throughout the canvass period.

- 39,863 DWP records where we currently cannot match the names to an address in the borough. We will manually match as many of these records as possible before the start of the annual canvass and load the records into the software system. During the canvass period, we will carry on matching the addresses and load them periodically. However, if all else fails, we will take a sample of these records (% from each ward) and carry out additional manual checks throughout the canvass period.
4. Each year, we remove around 4,000 electors as a result of the 2 year non-responders. So again, there may be some people in this dataset who will be deleted naturally through these removals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. That the data matching pilot report is noted.

BACKGROUND

6. The canvass return rate in Tower Hamlets for the 2011 Register of Electors, published on 10 January 2011, was 84.4%, leaving nearly 16% of non-responding properties. Tower Hamlets has a high proportion of gated and private blocks (7%), which are difficult to canvass due to entry systems or concierge refusing entry. In addition to this, we have a significant amount of short term company lets where the residents are only in situ for a few weeks and therefore do not respond.
7. The annual canvass in Tower Hamlets is conducted in three main stages:
- Stage 1 – canvassers to knock and collect initial voter registration forms over a four week period, then hand deliver remaining forms
- Stage 2 – canvassers to knock and collect reminder voter registration forms over a four week period, then hand deliver remaining forms
- Stage 3 – Royal Mail to deliver final reminder voter registration forms, with a four week period to respond
8. Over the past five years using over 130 canvassers to make personal visits from the beginning of the annual canvass has resulted in an average of 40% properties responding to the canvassers visits at stage one and a further 25% responding to the canvassers visits at stage two. The remaining returns are from the telephone/Internet services used for no changes or via the post.
9. Annually we have an average of 50+% of properties where there are changes to registration details during the canvass period.

Preliminary results of data matching with DWP

10.

- 169,397 records provided by the ERO
- 286,675 records received back from DWP
- 106,860 confirmed matches (up to 55% match)
- 139,952 additional data matches found by the ERO to addresses
- 39,863 manual matches to perform with Council Tax records and previous registers of which, 2,700 (see table 1) were manually matched before the start of the canvass

11. Table 1: Preliminary Manual Data Matching Codes and Results as @ 12/8/2011

- 1 = Property and Elector match – 133 (4.93%)
- 2 = Property Only match – 1,645 (60.93%)
- 3 = Property Only match, but confirmed Elector Move by ERO – 188 (6.96%)
- 4 = Property Not Identified – 62 (2.3%)
- 5 = New Property Identified – 2 (0.07%)
- 6 = Incorrect Postcode/Address – 85 (3.15%)
- 7 = Confirmed Commercial Property – 6 (0.22%)
- 8 = Foreign Nationals – 76 (2.81%)
- 9 = Elector Search – found at another address – 1 (0.03%)
- 10 = Property Identified, new elector found – 494 (18.3%)
- 11 = Duplicate DWP entry – 8 (0.3%)

Identifying eligible and ineligible electors

- 11.** At present the results do not show whether these are indeed accurate records. This will only become clear as the canvass progresses and additional matches are undertaken. During the initial manual match in table 1, we identified 494 new residents, who were sent a personalised Registration form to complete. To date, 55 forms (11%) have been completed and returned.
- 12.** It is also clear that the data contains people who should not be followed up as a missing elector as a result of one of the following circumstances:
- Non-qualifying nationality. The DWP data does not provide nationality which is one of the criteria for registration.
 - Duplicate records held by the DWP. Due to the way data has been presented back, we are unable to establish the level of duplicate entries existing in the DWP data.
 - Confirmed Moves. With a high population churn, there are a number of properties with multiple electors who have been confirmed as moved by the new resident, or confirmed by council tax records.
 - Out of date records. Again, with a high population churn and migrant communities, a number of properties appear to have an unrealistic number of records for potentially missing electors on the DWP list. This could be potential fraudulent activity in the source data.

Issues with the data matching process

- 13.** The data was returned as multiple line entries for each matched property. Additionally the data was returned with duplications to allow property matches to occur which created additional confusion and an inability to identify genuine entries within both data sets.
- 14.** Due to the absence of the LLPG reference or a returned eXpress property reference from the DWP data match, the quality of the addresses incurred additional manual checks, which could have been avoided.
- 16.** Use of inconsistent abbreviations, WY, ST, AV, AVE, CL, in the DWP data created difficulties with property matches.
- 17.** The use of middle names, in full by DWP, but only initials by the ERO caused additional mismatches.
- 18.** Tower Hamlets is concerned about the transfer of data, which was sent via the GCSX network. The data was split into four files by the ERO and sent to DWP for matching. DWP returned a large amount of data in 21 separate files, which was rejected by the ERO due to the currency of the data.
- 19.** The data was matched again by DWP using a currency value of 2 years. The re-matched data was returned in 12 separate files. To receive the data from DWP, the authority was required to confirm via email that they were ready to receive the data. Once confirmed, DWP would release the first file. This email was stopped by the authorities firewall due to the data being password protected. The email had to be released by ICT. The authority was then required to confirm to DWP via a further email that the data had been received, before the next data file was released. This process had to be followed for all 12 DWP files and took a considerable time to complete.
- 20.** Identifying new residents from within the DWP data set does not allow the authority add the residents on register due to lack of additional information required – nationality, exclusion from the edited register etc. These residents can only be invited to register by sending them a registration form. This can be seen as an additional onerous task, with already stretched resources.
- 21.** In order to maximise use of the information, data matching should be performed during the rolling registration period, prior to the annual canvass. This will give the authority time to write out to individuals found during the data match.
- 22.** All new electors identified from the DWP data were checked as still current with our council tax records, prior to being sent a registration form. This exercise has identified the need to set up communication with our own internal departments, to alert us when a resident moves into or out of a property within the borough. We can then allow a period of 2-4 weeks to enable the resident to settle in, before writing out to each person, inviting them to register.

Move to Individual Electoral Registration

23. In 2014, it is currently envisaged that the annual canvass will continue, but will be a request for information – the household enquiry form. The ERO will be required to send an individual registration form to every eligible person on the household enquiry form, enabling them to register should they so choose.
24. The implications of this voluntary, not mandatory provision will almost certainly have an impact on registration levels within the borough. In Tower Hamlets, I would guesstimate this to be in the region of 20-25%.
25. With the introduction of IER in 2014, an opportunity arises to register ALL residents in the borough, thus creating a 'complete' register of electors. At the time of an election, those residents who are not eligible to vote can be identified in the database with a 'classification mark' and a separate register produced for election purposes.

COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

26. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

27. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ONE TOWER HAMLETS

28. There are no immediate implications for One Tower Hamlets arising from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of "background paper"

Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection

None

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