

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

29 February 2012

Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform:

Electoral Registration: Annual Canvass 2012

Mark Harper

Elections for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) and potentially for elected Mayors in the larger English cities will take place on 15 November this year. These will fall in the period in which the annual canvass of electors normally takes place and as such raise a number of issues including concerns about the quality of the register available for the elections and the increased burden on electoral administrators of conducting a canvass at the same time as preparing for an election. The Government has worked closely with the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Electoral Commission and others to consider the options for addressing these concerns.

To better accommodate these elections I am directing Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to commence and conclude this year's canvass earlier than would normally be the case in the areas where PCC elections are taking place (England and Wales excluding London). Following a positive recommendation from the Electoral Commission on 21 February under section 8(1) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, I am issuing a direction today to all relevant EROs pursuant to section 52(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

This will be a one-off approach for this year and the canvass in Scotland and in London will be unaffected. This is the best option available to provide for consistency for the PCC elections and certainty for all involved.

The Government's clear aim is to ensure well-run elections and a successful annual canvass. Requiring the canvass to start earlier will ensure that there is sufficient time for EROs to carry out the full range of canvassing activities, consistent with their statutory duty to take all necessary steps to maintain complete and accurate registers. The Electoral Commission has developed specific guidance for electoral administrators on the practical implementation of the direction to supplement its existing good practice guidance on the annual canvass process.

I am placing a copy of the direction in the libraries of both Houses.