

Our Ref: NMP322036

Registration officers in England and Wales (outside London)

2 March 2012

ANNUAL CANVASS 2012

As you will be aware, 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 annual canvass period 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. I am grateful to all concerned for engaging so constructively.

In light of these discussions, and following a positive recommendation from the Electoral Commission, I have concluded that the best available option is that this year's canvass of electors should commence and conclude earlier than would normally be the case in the areas where PCC elections are taking place (England and Wales excluding London). Pursuant to section 52(1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 I have therefore issued a direction today to all relevant registration officers to commence the canvass as soon as reasonably practicable after 2 July (if not already started); to conclude the canvass on 15 October and to publish the revised register on 16 October. The specific direction is set out below.

This direction is issued without prejudice to the ongoing consultation and forthcoming Parliamentary consideration of the draft conduct regulations for the PCC elections. My view is that it is important to issue the direction now to ensure you have certainty about commencing the canvass.

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 a consistent approach within and across police authority areas and to ensure certainty for all involved in the process.

The Electoral Commission has developed specific guidance for electoral administrators to follow in exercising their duties in relation to the 2012 annual canvass and the publication of the revised register on 16 October 2012. This is published today and will supplement the Commission's existing detailed guidance on the annual canvass process.

The Government's clear aim – which I know we all share – is to ensure well-run Police and Crime Commissioner elections (and Mayoral elections where relevant) and a successful annual canvass. Requiring the canvass to start early will ensure that there is sufficient time for you to carry out the full range of

canvassing activities, consistent with your statutory duty to take all necessary steps to maintain complete and accurate registers. I would urge you also to ensure prompt reporting to the Electoral Commission under the performance standards framework in order that any issues are swiftly identified and followed up and also to the annual data collection exercise following the canvass to ensure an effective assessment can be made of the impact of this direction on the state of the registers.

I am aware that this will be a challenging time for electoral administrators and their suppliers and would like to thank you once again for your efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Harper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MARK HARPER