



Political and Constitutional Reform Committee

Committee Office House of Commons 14 Tothill Street London SW1H 9NB
Tel 020 7219 0737 Email pcrc@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/pcrc

Sam Gyimah MP
Minister for the Constitution
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

5 March 2015

Dear Sam

I am writing to set out a number of concerns my Committee has in relation to the December 2014 electoral registers for England and Wales, and the current transition to Individual Electoral Registration. This follows the Electoral Commission's report on the December 2014 electoral registers for England and Wales, and an oral evidence session we held with Jenny Watson and colleagues on 2 March 2015.

Our concerns are:

- **The decrease in the number of people registered to vote in England and Wales.** There are 920,000 fewer people on the December 2014 electoral registers for England and Wales than the February/March 2014 registers. In certain areas the register has up to 12% fewer entries. The Electoral Commission has attributed this fall to the “lack of comprehensive household canvass activity in 2014”.
- **The risk of people falling off the electoral register when transitional arrangements end in December 2016 or, if the next Government decides to bring the date forward, December 2015.** The Electoral Commission has estimated there are between 2 and 2.5 million people who have only been retained on the electoral registers, for England and Wales, under the transitional arrangements for IER.
- **Issues with electoral data.** The Electoral Commission has stated that, due to problems with the reporting functions of the Electoral Management Software (EMS) systems used by EROs, it does not have “a full set of data of a sufficient quality to enable us to undertake a detailed analysis of progress with the transition to IER”.

These are in addition to our ongoing concerns about registering to vote the 7.5 million people it is estimated are not correctly registered to vote. We have previously criticised the failure of EROs to fulfil their statutory duties, in some cases for several consecutive years, and the failure of the Electoral Commission and Government to take the necessary action to ensure that legal requirements are met, and every effort made to maximise electoral registration.

Please advise the Committee what action you, as the Minister responsible for the transition to IER, have taken to respond to the issues set out above.

I would be grateful if you could respond in writing no later than Wednesday 18 March, so that my Committee has the opportunity to consider your response before Parliament dissolves.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Graham Allen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Graham Allen MP
Chair of the Committee