



Glasgow City Council

**Wellbeing, Equalities, Communities, Culture and Engagement City
Policy Committee**

Report by Executive Director of Financial Services

Contact: Robert Emmott Ext: 73837

Item 2

14th August 2025

AUTOMATIC VOTER REGISTRATION

Purpose of Report:

To update the Committee on progress in developing proposals for Automatic Voter Registration.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) notes the Report;
- (b) notes that the Electoral Registration Officer will apply for funding to develop the pilot proposal, on the basis that this will be informed by the Welsh pilots; and
- (c) agrees that a further report be presented to the Committee before the end of the year.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 3 April 2025 the Council approved a motion initiated by Councillor Alex Kerr, and seconded by Councillor Greg Hepburn, that Officers should put forward Glasgow as a location for an automatic voter registration pilot with the Scottish Government and that a paper should be brought to this Committee to explore the possibility of this and report back on other ways including the use of data that the Council could use to increase democratic participation and wellbeing.
- 1.2 This Report provides an update on progress and recommendations as to next steps in the process, as well as providing information on other ways Council data could be used to increase democratic participation.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Automatic voter registration (AVR) represents a shift from the existing approach of using data to invite potential electors to apply for inclusion in the electoral register to automatically enrolling known eligible persons on the register using data.
- 2.2 The Council's decision to progress (AVR) is consistent with the role it has taken previously as one of the lead Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) who piloted data driven annual electoral canvass reform.
- 2.3 The new legislation provides for a local authority or an ERO to propose a pilot, which relates to the register of local government electors in its area, and it must consult with the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland prior to submitting such a proposal (see Scottish Elections (Representation and Reform) Act 2025 Section 41(2)).
- 2.4 Implementation of AVR will require the use of existing datasets that the Council holds about eligible persons and the legislation includes provisions for the Scottish Government to make regulations to enable data to be used for these purposes, though this is limited by the extent of reserved powers.

3.0 Data considerations

- 3.1 The Glasgow ERO takes a proactive approach throughout the year to maintain a complete and accurate electoral register and data integrity is a key consideration in this work.
- 3.2 At present potential electors are identified using the following data sources:
 - Glasgow education data;
 - Independent schools data;
 - University and college data;
 - Council Tax billing data;
 - Scottish prison service data; and
 - Registrars' data (citizenship data).
- 3.3 The ERO and his team work hard to ensure that the register is accurate, and this will be one of the critical considerations of AVR. Applications are verified and accuracy maintained using the following data sources:

- DWP;
- Home Office (Immigration Status);
- Registrars' data (notification of deaths); and
- Council Tax Billing (movers' data)

3.4 The Glasgow Electoral Registration Office already use a wide range of trusted and verified datasets to encourage and improve registration but is always open to utilising others provided they can be shown to be of sufficient quality and currency to aid the registration process.

3.5 Options for pilot AVRs could include using Council Tax data, claimant data or school data. A key aspect of the pilot would be establishing the quality of the information held and whether there is sufficient reliance on its quality to use it to automatically include individuals on the register. Outcomes might include changes to how the Council holds and processes data in other systems to achieve the required level of integrity.

4.0 Current pilots

4.1 During 2025 four local authorities across Wales are taking part in AVR pilots.

4.2 The pilots were established under the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024 and will test different approaches to registering to vote without requiring a formal application. The pilots' range in scope from evaluation models to assisted registration improvements and full automation.

4.3 The Electoral Commission will evaluate the pilots by the end of this year. The Welsh Government will then consider the findings before making decisions on any nationwide implementation of automatic voter registration, which would require further legislation.

5.0 Actions and next steps

5.1 Since the Council decision the Council's ERO has engaged with colleagues in the Scottish Electoral Registration Committee, Electoral Commission and Scottish Government advising them of the Councils position and considering the best way to progress a pilot.

5.2 As a potential AVR pilot, Glasgow would have to work collaboratively with all Scottish EROs to ensure any AVR pilot is designed in a way that maintains accuracy and trust in the wider Electoral Register before being put to consultation with the Electoral Commission and Electoral Management Board for Scotland.

5.3 Developing a pilot proposal would have material staffing implications for the service at a time where resources are constrained. The legislation permits Scottish Government to provide funding to support increasing democratic engagement, and the ERO will therefore apply for funding to develop the pilot proposal, on the basis that this is informed by the Welsh pilots.

6 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: Work undertaken will require to be within existing resources.

Legal: No impact

Personnel: No impact

Procurement: No impact

Council Strategic Plan: Grand Challenge 4, Mission 2 - Run an open, well-governed council in partnership with all our communities

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify. No impact

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report? No impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage. No impact

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify: No impact

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal? No impact

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target? No impact

**Privacy and Data
Protection Impacts:**

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report No

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

7 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) notes the Report;
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- (c) agrees that a further report be presented to the Committee before the end of the year.