# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulation 2020** |
| **DATE**  | **10 December 2019** |
| **BY** | **Julie James AM, Minister for Housing and Local Government** |

I am laying before the Assembly a Statutory Instrument, *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020* introducing new Regulations which will govern the annual electoral canvass from 2020 onwards. This Statutory Instrument will follow the affirmative procedure.

The new Regulations represent the culmination of a joint programme of work with the Scottish and UK Governments to modernise and reform the annual canvass. The Regulations will retain the robust elements of the current canvass but will allow more flexibility for Electoral Registration Officers to tailor the canvass to the households in their area.

As responsibility for electoral matters relating to local government elections in Wales and Senedd elections has now been devolved, in order to reform the canvass it has been necessary to introduce legislation in each of the three administrations. The UK Government has already done this through the introduction of *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019* which were made on the 4th November 2019.

The Statutory Instrument is introduced as part of a suite of electoral reforms including the extension of the franchise for devolved elections, achieved in part by the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill (introduced on the 18th November 2019). The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill also includes other important provisions aimed at improving voter registration such as registration without application, sometimes called automatic registration and the option to create an all-Wales Database of Electoral Registration Information.

Taken together with the changes in the annual canvass introduced by these regulations*,* our electoral reforms will work together to modernise the registration processes as well as improving efficiency and voter experience. Collectively they represent significant change in our electoral system and a wide ranging programme of work which will take time to fully and effectively implement. Our long term aim is to make electoral processes simpler, more accessible and more relevant to the electorate.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the hard working elections teams based in our 22 local authorities. These important reforms could not be delivered without their commitment and contribution and I am very grateful for their support in taking this work forward.