Mr King has referred to the Panel’s invitation on to myself as the administration of elections is carried out by the Cabinet Office of Isle of Man Government, rather than by our parliament, Tynwald. The Crown and Elections Team is responsible for all aspects of administrating and conducting national elections to the House of Keys, including the electoral register. Detailed below is some information for the consideration of the Panel the reduction of the minimum voting age in the Isle of Man. In summary, focusing solely on the administration of elections, the impact of reducing the minimum voting age to 16 has been minimal and relates mainly to:

* Increasing the number of registered voters by extending the franchise;
* Voter engagement work to ensure that young people i) are registered and ii) know how to exercise their vote;
* Being mindful of the differing age minimum for electoral registration and jury lists.

**Electoral Registration**

The Registration of Electors Act 2006 provided for the minimum voting age in the Isle of Man to be lowered from 18 to 16.

Presently the Isle of Man operates a system of household electoral registration and it is therefore incumbent upon the head of the household to include all eligible electors on the annual canvass form. Electoral registers are updated on a quarterly basis, effective from 1 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 September each year. The head of household can submit an amended electoral registration form in the appropriate quarter to include a member of the household who will qualify on the basis they meet, or will meet, the minimum age requirement by the specified electoral registration deadline for that quarter.

Publicity was issued in the run up to the 2016 general election to remind young people about to turn 16 that they could add their names to the electoral register in advance so that they were eligible to vote as soon as they reach their 16th birthday. This meant that young people who turned 16 before the House of Keys General Election on September 22, and were included on a household voter registration form before the deadline could vote on polling day.

By comparing the number of 16 and 17 year old registered for last year’s election with population figures from the 2016 census it is possible to calculate registration rates. The 2016 census gives population for 16 & 17 year olds as 1,981. Of these 1,158, 58% were registered to vote. This is a lower rate than for people aged 18 and over, who had a registration rate in 2016 of 88%.

**Jury Lists**

A relevant issue is that although the voting age has been lowered to 16, the age at which a person can serve on a jury remains at 18. The list of persons eligible to serve on a jury is extracted from the electoral register. The provider of the Isle of Man’s electoral registration system has programmed the system to exclude 16 and 17 year olds from the jury list.

**Youth Voter Engagement**

Youth voter engagement is encouraged through education initiatives in the Island’s secondary schools and college. This comes to the fore at General Election time when student friendly promotional material is disseminated by the Island’s Department of Education and Children to the Island’s year 12 and 13 students in leaflet, presentation and digital media forms. Hustings style events were also held at the Island’s high schools ahead of the election.

The table below provides statistics on voter registration and turnout for 16 and 17 year olds for the three previous General Elections.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **General Election** | **Voted** | **Registered** | **% turnout** |
| 2016 | 535 | 1158 | 46.2% |
| 2011 | 668 | 1234 | 54.1% |
| 2006 | 397 | 718 | 55.3% |

The Panel may find the following submission made by the then Speaker of the House of Keys, The Hon Stephen Charles Rodan SHK (now President of Tynwald), to a Westminster Committee of Enquiry in 2014 useful.

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/political-and-constitutional-reform-committee/voter-engagement-in-the-uk/written/9737.html>

I hope that this submission is useful to the Expert Panel. If they require any further information regarding the experience of the Isle of Man in administering elections, please do not hesitate to contact me.