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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND**NOTE OF MEETING OF 8 JUNE 2023, 2PM*****MEETING HELD VIA MS TEAMS***  |
| Present: Chris Highcock (Secretary) Andy O’Neill (Electoral Commission) Alison Davidson (Electoral Commission)Malcolm Burr (Convener)Kenneth Lawrie (RO Falkirk)Doig, Jim (ERO D&G)Andy Hunter (AEA)Jim Savege (RO Aberdeenshire)Andrew Kerr (RO Edinburgh)Mark Cooper (Scottish government)James Newman (Scottish Government) Penelope Curtis (Scottish Government)Iain Hockenhull (Scottish Government) | Paul Docker (UK Government) Sarah Mackie (Electoral Commission)Fergus Christie (Scottish government)Mark Hughes (UK Government)Liz Ure (Scottish Government)Maria McCann (Scottish Government)Isabel Drummond-Murray (Boundaries Scotland)Angus Reid (Scottish Government)Mark Conaghan (SOLAR)ApologiesAnnmarie O’Donnell (RO Glasgow)Steve Grimmond (RO Fife)Mark Adam (ERO Grampian)Pete Wildman (ERO Central)  |
|  |  | **NOTE** | **ACTION** |
| **1.0/****2.0** | **Apologies/Matters Arising****Note of previous meeting** | * Apologies see above, noted
* Note of the meeting of 25 January 2023 accepted as accurate. All matters arising were dealt with on the agenda.
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| **3.0** | **Update on actions following January EMB Planning Day**  | * Paper noted as a useful summary of EMB work programme.
* **ACTION** - this to be a standing item on future agendas to allow monitoring of EMB work as identified at January 23 meeting.
* Political literacy in the context of spoiled papers remains a priority for EMB and Electoral Commission to address together. Also of keen interest to politicians.
* Several of the issues identified are to be addressed further in the meeting.
 | **CH** |
| **4.0** | **Accessibility Subgroup**  | * Oral update provided by CH on the work of the Accessibility subgroup of the EMB. Most recent meeting had been on 6 June. Group had reviewed a number of process maps showing the journey of voters engaging in various activities from registration to voting with accessibility challenges identified.
* Group was looking to identify simple steps to address accessibility challenges throughout the registration/voting process.
* Visits to England to observe at the 4 May Council elections had highlighted a range of accessibility measures to be assessed for application in Scotland. These ranged from simple – e.g., more prominent signage – to more complex e.g. QR codes at polling places pointing to audio versions of the ballot paper available on line.
* MMcC noted her observation of measures in Northern Ireland including telephone helpline.
* LU noted progress on tactile ballot paper option with testing of prototypes with blind voters.
* PD noted that the UK Government and Electoral Commission were working on testing to identify a useful package of options.
* **ACTION** – Accessibility Group are working on a matrix of options to identify measures that can be implemented quickly at low cost and those that will need longer term development, possible support in legislation and additional funding. Priority is to have measures in place for next UKPGE. Update to be given to next EMB. Options/Devices to be on display at EMB/Electoral Commission conference eon 6 October
 | **CH** |
| **5.0** | **EMB Forms Group**  | * Forms subgroup has reconvened. Group has reviewed the suite of forms provided to RO teams in Scotland, separate from those provided by the Electoral Commission. Aim is to focus on those forms most used by RO Teams.
* Initial work to commence after the summer with a focus on forms needed for the next UKPGE.
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| **6.0** | **Elections Funding** | **Staff Fees** * Paper circulated for information showing the current range of fees for various duties by election teams across Scotland.
* It was noted that for the next UKPGE staff fees will need to align with those specified for each role by DLUHC in their forthcoming guidance.

**Holiday Pay for elections staff** * There have been incidents across UK with staff claiming that they are due holiday (and sometimes pay in lieu of notice) following their casual employment in election roles.
* DLUHC are drafting guidance note on this which will be circulated
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| **7.0** | **Liaison Programme with English Councils: Lessons from observation at polling at English Council elections 4 May 2023**  | * Paper with its proposed recommendations noted. EMB to facilitate debrief of Scottish Observers on 12 June.
* There had been a number of reviews of introduction of Voter ID at the English elections. All were identifying similar lessons as those in the EMB paper.
* Key conclusion was that proportionate approach needed – Voter ID was important but should not dominate election planning and preparation to the exclusion of other important elements.
* It remains to be seen how applicable lessons will be to a high turnout contentious election in Scotland.
* Staffing remains major risk to delivery of election, but it was noted that this is an ongoing problem not necessarily related to Voter ID. Bank Holiday following polling day was cited in several cases as an impediment to recruitment of staff
* Electoral Commission to report on their review of elections by end of June 2023.
* **ACTION** CH to update report and circulate following EMB debrief of observers. EMB approved initial recommendations.
 | **CH** |
| **8.0** | **RO/ERO Joint EMB & Electoral Commission Conference 6 October 2023**  | * Event to be held in Caird Hall Dundee
* “Hold the date” had email circulated to ROs and EROs
* Working Group established to plan event
* **ACTION** – to remain a standing item on the agenda
 | **CH** |
| **9.0** | **Preparation for UK Parliamentary General Election**  | **General Update** * PD noted the factors to be considered in supporting planning for next UKPGE : Elections Act, new UK constituency boundaries, current canvas and review of polling arrangements.
* SI will be made identifying the RO for each constituency.

**Elections Act 2022: Next Stages** * Paper circulated showing the sequence for the implementation of the next stages of the Act.
* These will include online absent vote applications for UK elections, removal of ‘fifteen-year rule’ for overseas electors and introduction of restrictions on handling of postal votes.

**Divergence issues** * Note that a Divergence Task Group has been established following the model of the Expert Panel to support planning for measures to address divergences across devolved administrations. Given the aim to introduce online absent vote application from October, there are significant challenges around EMS (IT) systems and the forms to be deployed.
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| **10.0** | **Statutory Reviews of Polling Arrangements**  | * Paper circulated noting issues arising from the competing areas of work and related deadlines. New UK boundaries require polling districts to be reviewed. Registers will be published on 1 December. ROs and EROs need to be prepared for a UKPGE on the new constituency boundaries during 2024. Any by-election or recall petition would need to be on existing boundaries. Councils need to complete periodic statutory review of polling arrangements in the 16 month period from 1 October 2023.
* Electoral Commission were to prepare guidance for ROs and EROs on review of polling arrangements in the context of these different workstreams and deadlines.
* DLUHC were considering the issues.
* **ACTION** CH to circulate paper to ROs and EROs proposing an approach to sequencing the various activities – modifying polling districts now to allow for publication on the basis of new constituencies, allowing a later full review of polling arrangements.
 | **CH** |
| **11.0** | **Response to** [**Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform**](https://www.gov.scot/publications/electoral-reform-consultation/#:~:text=This%20consultation%20seeks%20to%20deliver,young%20people%20and%20foreign%20nationals.) | * EMB response to the consultation had been submitted 14 March. Noted
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| **12.0** | **Guidance for the delivery of a Scottish Independence Referendum**  | * Full suite of guidance on the delivery of a Scottish Independence Referendum under the Referendum (Scotland) Act 2020 had been completed.
* Guidance would need to be reviewed and updated ahead of any referendum to ensure it reflected current electoral practice.
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| **13.0**  | **eCounting for 2027 General Strategy**  | * Oral update from Convener. Paper had been supplied to ROs at SOLACE following a discussion between EMB and Scottish Government considering options for delivery of eCount for the 2027 council elections. Key driver was growing cost of eCount plus the 2022 experience where there were some problems with support from contractor.
* Deadline of end July had been given for responses from ROs. Currently no support for consolidated count centres.
* **ACTION** – update to be given to future meeting of EMB
 | **MB** |
| **14.0** | **Fujitsu Review of delivery of by-elections since May 2022**  | * Update following regular review of by-election performance by Fujitsu.
* Range of adjudication rates across different contests noted. It was observed that there is an issue for the eCount system in the recognition of the numeral 1 with many voters now writing it in a way that is confused with a 7.
* **ACTION** – to feed into work with Electoral Commission on political literacy and reduction in spoiled papers.
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| **15.0** | **Scottish Government General Update**  | * Written update circulated previously covering appointments to Boundaries Scotland, Electoral Reform Consultation and divergence issues around UK Elections Act
* [**Review of Prisoner Voting**](https://links.uk.defend.egress.com/Warning?crId=6475bd809527e09eaf1aa1c6&Domain=edinburgh.gov.uk&Lang=en&Base64Url=eNo1TTEOAjEMewxio1fEWIkNZqT7QWlz10ilqZJcj4m30wox2JZiO06qVZy1-75PK7VJAqmt2zNj8IpUxDJUYjWVUagAm0aKZTUjqCjJRGiUG0QDGcKvcnAfp_DW682rP17OC9Ory31-dJYOLHH8BznpxoUacD_SMtw0xhR4FP6b8gVPtjzF)Report shared for information
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| **16.0**  | **UK Government – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Elections and Registration Update**  | * [**Ballot Secrecy Act 2023**](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/12/contents/enacted)  **-** noted
* Updated Security Advice for Elections –  [from Cabinet Office](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/security-guidance-for-may-2021-elections#full-publication-update-history) for information
* MH noted programme for Tranche 2 of the Elections Act. Full involvement from EMB through JD, CH and previously PW
* PD noted that there would be a review of acceptable ID but in general implementation of first tranche of measures had gone well.
* Recall Petition – contact had been made with team in South Lanarkshire with finance addressed.

**UK Funding Working Group*** Further update to guidance expected by end of July.
* Note steps in place to ensure consistency in payments to staff.
* Digital portal in development to allow online submission of claims.
* Holiday pay issues is being reviewed and guidance will be issued.
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| **17** | **Electoral Commission General Update**  | * Written update previously circulated covering issues including updated guidance, recall petition, by-elections, guidance and forms, public awareness and preparation for October conference with EMB
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| **18** | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA update**  | * 2023 canvas activity noted with data matching commencing from 12 June with Ayrshire going first.
* Support being provided for Recall Petition.
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| **19** | **AEA update**  | * Noted lessons form 4 May elections in England
* Work under way to identify a new AEA trainer for Scotland
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| **20** | **Boundaries Issues - *update from Scottish Boundary Commissions*** | * Noted new Chair appointed – Ailsa Henderson.
* Proposals for UK constituency boundaries submitted to Speaker by 1 July. Expected to go on 27 June, made public on 28 June, with all four commissions submitting around the same time. Order with the new constituencies expected in October 2023.
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| **21** | **EMB Admin**  | **Membership – ROvacancy** * MB had written to ROs on 26 May seeking expressions of interest in joining as RO member following retirement of Steve Grimmond.

**Appointment of Vice Convener*** MB to write to RO and ERO members of the EMB to seek interest in role of Vice Convener RO and Vice Convener ERO, to add resilience to structure and to formalise the “lead ERO role within the EMB.
 | **MB**  |
| **22** | **Log of local government by-elections**  | * Noted.
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| **23** | **Potential Recall Petition Rutherglen and Hamilton West**  | * On 6 June 2023, the House of Commons voted to suspend Margaret Ferrier for 30 days which imitated recall process. On 6 June 2023, South Lanarkshire Council was formally notified by Speaker of the House of Commons that a Petition was to be opened.
* The Petition will open at 9am on 20 June 2023 and will remain open for a period of six weeks, closing at 5pm on 31 July. There are seven locations within the constituency where electors will be able to sign in person, these are open 9am to 5pm on most working days in this period, with some days of extended hours. Persons are also able to sign via post or proxy.
* At the announcement of the Petition, the electorate of the constituency was determined to be 81,124 persons, meaning that 8,113 signatures are required for success. No ongoing tally will be published; the number of signatures, and whether or not the petition has been successful, will not be reported until the end of the signing period.
* EMB and Electoral Commission are in contact with the team in South Lanarkshire offering advice and support.
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| **24** | **Any Other Business**  | * None
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**Future Meetings**

* Meeting to planned for late September taking account of 6 October conference.