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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND**NOTE OF MEETING OF 13 DECEMBER 2023, 2PM*****MEETING HELD VIA MS TEAMS***  |
| Present: Chris Highcock (secretary)Malcolm Burr (Convener)Alison Davidson (Electoral Commission)Jim Doig (ERO D&G)Kenneth Lawrie (RO Falkirk)Mark Conaghan (SOLAR)Catherine Heggie (Electoral Commission) Milne, Pippa (RO Argyll and Bute)Iain Hockenhull (Scottish Government)Geoffrey Harbison (Scottish Government)Maria McCann (Scottish Government)Mark Cooper (Scottish Government)Liz Ure (Scottish Government)Kenneth Pentland (Scottish Government)Angus Reid (Scottish Government)Andrew Hunter (AEA)Andy O’Neill (Electoral Commission) | ApologiesAnnmarie O’Donnell (RO Glasgow)Jim Savege (RO Aberdeenshire)Andrew Kerr (RO Edinburgh)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 8 June 2023 accepted as accurate.
	+ All matters arising dealt with on the agenda or complete
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| **3.0** | **Update on actions following January EMB Planning Day (standing Item for monitoring work programme)** | * Noted for information
* Paper to be used to monitor EMB work programme.
* **ACTION CH to circulate to give visibility to work**
 | **CH** |
| **4.0** | **Accessibility Subgroup**  | * Update noted covering the three distinct workstreams: immediate actions, medium term (audio and tactile) and longer term (mainly digital)

**Discussion paper – Measures to improve accessibility during elections (Short-Term/Immediate)*** Recommendations noted and agreed. **ACTION** – Paper to be finalised as an Issues Paper and circulated to ROs/EROs as Recommendations from the Convener of the EMB
 | **CH** |
| **5.0** | **EMB Forms Group**  | * No further activity reported since the June meeting update.
* Forms Group to meet to consider most appropriate approach to supporting the community for the forthcoming UKPGE.
 | **CH** |
| **6.0** | **Preparation for UK Parliamentary General Election** | **Potential Recommendations for ROs and EROs for UKPGE in 2024–** * Paper noted and recommendations agreed
* **ACTION** – once a UKPGE date is announced Convener of the EMB will issues recommendations to ROs and EROs to cover areas identified: Date of Publication of Notice of Election; Date of Dispatch of Poll Cards; Date of dispatch of first and final issue of postal votes ;Date of publication of second interim electoral notice of alteration (SIENA).
* **ACTION**- as agreed at 4.1, Convener will also make recommendation with respect to basic accessibility measures to be adopted.

**Public Awareness – Voter ID & Postal Vote Handling*** Councils’ Communications Network had been reestablished and EMB and Electoral Commission had met to brief them on the issues associated with public awareness of the Elections Act changes.
* Lessons had been taken from Voter ID in England and from Rutherglen by-election
* Electoral Commission campaign was discussed elsewhere in the meeting.

**Elections Act 2022*** Letter from Catherine Frances (DLUHC) noted
* EMB and Electoral Commission joint webinars scheduled for 13 and 18 December to allow discussion with DLUHC on Elections Act Funding.

**Divergence Issues*** Risk Summary noted
* Further discussion needed around all divergence issues especially with respect to OAVA and signature refresh **ACTION** Scottish Government to host seminar to discuss key issues and agree actions.
 | **CH****CH****CH****IH** |
| **7.0** | **eCounting for 2027 General Strategy** | * Paper noted including road map for procurement process.
* **ACTION** EMB agreed that Councils should be invited to nominate people to join the procurement strategy working group. CH to write to councils to request nominations
 | **CH** |
| **8.0** | **EMB & Electoral Commission Joint Seminars – UK Elections Funding / Voter ID at Recall Petition and UK by-election / Postal Vote Handing / New Burdens Funding** | * Series of seminars planned to support RO and ERO staff on key developments
* To include UK Election Act funding; Experience of Recall and Voter ID at by-election in Rutherglen (both in December), with session planned on Postal Vote Handling / Secrecy in January/February when Electoral Commission Guidance is published.
* Note that Postal Vote Handling is to be covered at AEA Conference in January 2024 and they have offered to repeat seminar for free in Scotland. **ACTION** CH to contact AEA to investigate
 | **CH AD****CH AH**  |
| **9.0** | **Capacity Building and Resilience**  | * Workshop at the 6 October Conference covered issues associated with Capacity Building and development of Resilience for ROs/EROs/Councils
* Paper in draft covering issues identified and proposed actions
* **ACTION** Paper to be considered at next meeting of EMB
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| **10.0** | **Scottish Government General Update** | * Paper noted which covered the responses to the Scottish Government’s consultation on Electoral Reform to feed int development of the proposed Electoral Reform Bill expected in January 2024.
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| **11.0** | **UK Government – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Elections and Registration Update**  | **UK Funding Working Group** * Final Guidance on funding for UK Parliamentary Elections expected in January / February including agreed pay rates for suite of jobs, intended to support consistency.
* Note that several officers had volunteered from across Scotland to test the new digital portal for submission of claims.

**Letter to UK Minister re Funding** * Letter had been submitted to the UK Minister responsible for Elections highlighting concerns of ROs in Scotland with respect to the approach to funding of elections
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| **12.0** | **Electoral Commission Update**  | * Paper noted covering updates on Guidance and Resources, EC Reports on Accuracy and Completeness and the Rutherglen Recall Petition and general support to the sector.
* Update provided on Communication and Awareness Activity including Welcome to your Vote Week, changes to absent voting, registration, Voter ID and overseas voters.
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| **13.0**  | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA update** | * New Registers published 1 December except for areas with by-elections or polling review.
* Oral update noting issues already covered at the meeting including OAVA, divergence and signature refresh
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| **14.0** | **AEA update**  | * No specific update
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| **15.0** | **Boundaries Issues**  | * It was noted that this was the last meeting at which Isabel Drummond-Murray will be present as she is to retire.
* MB expressed his thanks for her work in leading the Boundaries work over recent years.
* IDM noted ongoing consultation around proposals for Scottish Parliament constituencies.
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| **16.0**  | **EMB Administration** | **Membership*** New RO Member appointed – Pippa Milne, RO for Argyll and Bute
* MB welcomed PM to the meeting and thanked her for agreeing to take on the role.

**Appointment of Vice Conveners** * Jim Savege had been appointed as Depute Convener (RO) and Jim Doing as Depute Convener (ERO)
* These were not statutory roles but intended to give particular support to the Convener as needed.
* **ACTION** MB to meet with JS and JD to discuss role and responsibilities.

**EMB Annual Report*** Report is in draft; **ACTION** final version to be considered at next meeting of the EMB then submitted to Scottish Parliament

**EMB Funding** * Additional funding identified for EMB to focus on accessibility
* ACTION MB CH to develop proposals for discussion at next EMB
 | **MB CH JS JD****CH MB****MB CH** |
| **17** | **Local government by-elections** | * Log of by-elections noted
* Fujitsu review of by-election to October 2023 noted
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| **18** | **Recall Petition Rutherglen and Hamilton West** | * Electoral Commission [Report on the 2023 recall petition in Rutherglen and Hamilton West](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/our-reports-and-data-past-elections-and-referendums/report-2023-recall-petition-rutherglen-and-hamilton-west) noted
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| **19** | **Evidence Provided to Senedd Cymru (for information)** | * Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill – noted
* Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill – noted
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| **20** | **Any Other Business**  | * Future Meetings **ACTION** CH to identify dates for 4 meetings through 2024. Dates may need to be revised due UKPGE.
 | **CH** |