Present:
- **Board members:** Mary Pitcaithly (MP Convener & RO), Brian Byrne (BB ERO, SAA rep), Douglas Gillespie (DG ERO), Joan Hewton (JH ERO), Bob Jack (RJ RO), David Anderson (DA RO) Malcolm Burr, (MB RO) Gordon Blair (GB DRO SOLAR rep) Roddy Angus (RA Scotland Office)
- **Advisers**: David Freeland (DF Electoral Commission) Alex Thomson (AT Scottish Government Consultant) Andy Sinclair (AS Scottish Government) Steve Sadler (SS Scottish Government) Jon Harris (JH COSLA), Andy O'Neill (AON Electoral Commission)
- **In attendance:** Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board DRO)

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
1	Apologies	- Sheila Scobie (SSc Scotland Office) - Billy Pollock (WP DRO AEA rep) - Sue Bruce (SB RO) - Stuart Galloway (SG DRO)	**Noted**
2	Note of Previous Meeting (4 February 2012)	- Accepted as an accurate record. - There were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda.	**Noted**

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
3	**Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 2012**	**Meeting with the Minister** • The Convener and Secretary of the EMB had met with the Minister responsible for the elections (Derek MacKay). This had been a positive meeting and he had been reassured by the preparations that were in place and by the project management arrangements. • The Minister subsequently attended an eCounting demo at Pentland House with other politicians. **Publishing Post Election Data** • Material on publishing post election data had been circulated to ROs and to the PPP. This had been well received. The key issue was to ensure that in the event of having to combine ballot boxes then boxes from similar localities would be aggregated. **Guidance: Ballot Paper Printing :Mc/Mac** • Guidance had been circulated to ROs by email to ensure that the rules in the Order were clearly understood: Ballot papers were to be arranged in the order of surname, alphabetically, with surnames in Capitals and MAC always to precede MC Guidance: Verification tolerances • This was dealt with in the FAQ document to be circulated ACTION CH to circulate FAQ document. • EMB Guidance should be clear: o Any discrepancy at the verification stage then check that the correct figure has been entered from the Ballot Paper Account	

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE

		o Rescan the tray
		o Accept the rescanned figure
		
		Guidance: Potential risk of industrial action (fuel deliveries)
		
		• Note the current risk of industrial action involving tanker drivers and the threat to transport.
		• This could affect
		   o Delivery of Ballot Papers
		   o Delivery of Postal Ballots
		   o Transport for polling staff
		   o Transport of count equipment
		• **ACTION – Convener** to write to ROs to ensure that they:
		   o **Place this on their Risk Register**
		   o **Consider adding Presiding Officers to list of essential fuel user**
		• **ACTION –** Convener to write to Logica to request that they report their own contingency plans in the event of a fuel shortage
		• **ACTION –** Convener to write to the Royal Mail re request that they report their own contingency plans in the event of a fuel shortage
		• ACTION – CH to mention in the next Bulletin
		
		Adjudication of Doubtful Papers - supplementary guidance
		
		• Following the Spring Seminars, supplementary guidance had been prepared by Gordon Blair to address examples of doubtful papers not in the Electoral Commission material
		• This material had been discussed at SOLACE in the morning (30/3/12)
		• There had been agreement on all of the issues in the paper – for example the use of "sad faces" - except for the issue of a paper where the a number
			CH to draft
			
			CH to draft
			
			CH to draft

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE

		– either a figure or a word was placed next to a candidate and that was all that was on the paper, e.g. a "4" next to the fourth candidate or the word "four" next to the fourth candidate..
		
		   o The Electoral Commission's position is clear and the opinion of Counsel is clear that both would be rejected on 2 grounds:
		        ▪ Rule 44(1) (b) no first preference
		        ▪ Rule 44 (1) (e) void for uncertainty, intention of voter is not reasonably clear.
		   o However
		        ▪ the decision is always for the RO to take
		        ▪ there might be a circumstance in which there had been campaigning on the basis of ranking on the paper e.g., "Vote 4 on the paper for me!"
		   o In the event of an election petition,
		   o EMB Guidance to be issued therefore to clarify that e.g. 4 or "four" as the sole mark on a paper to be rejected on the basis of Rule 44(1) (b) & (e); however the final decision is always for the RO; if they were to deviate from this guidance they would have to be satisfied that they could defend this in a petition given the clear statements of the Order and of the guidance from the Electoral Commission and their Counsel.
		
		eCounting Project Board Update
		
		• All was progressing well.
		• Now that nominations are finalised there will be an exercise to review scanner allocations. Additional scanners may be allocated where necessary
		• Note that some ROs had requested that dual screens should not be used at verification. ACTION EMB agreed that in the interests of transparency all ROs should use dual screens. This had also been promoted in the material	

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
		on creating informed candidates that the EMB had circulated **FAQs on confidence in the system including guidance on recounts** • Paper from Gordon Blair was tabled. • ACTION all to review and send any comments to CH by 4 April. CH to circulate to ROs ahead of any briefings for candidates **Printing / Mock Count** • All seems to be progressing well. • Note that there was an issue with respect to the treatment of the forenames of candidates when there are two candidates on the paper with the same surname. Opt2Vote were revising typeface with the printer to adhere to the order. **Training: Feedback** • All training now complete following sessions in Aberdeen • Feedback had been positive and there had been some adjustmen to the process in response to lessons from training, e.g., manual entry process **Communications Plan** • ACTION eCounting Project Board to share Communications Plan so that it is clear between the Scottish Government / Logica / EMB and RO who is responsible for what and what times **Update from Electoral Commission**	

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
		• Performance Standards reporting has been completed well. **Public Awareness** • Copies of the booklet were available • Note that large numbers are available for photo opportunities to promote STV and raise awareness of how to vote. **Postal Voting / Royal Mail** • No issues	
4	**EMB Administration**	• No issues	
5	**Bulletin / Newsletter**	• Bulletin had been circulated • Further issue to be circulated prior to the election • **ACTION** ALL to send any items for inclusion to CH by 9 April	**ALL**
6	**Regional Returning Officers' Group and associated meetings**	• Noted. Neither the Convener nor the Secretary had attended recent meetings due to diary pressure and lack of relevance for Scottish elections. • For reference, papers are available at **http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups**)	**Noted**

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
7	**Political Parties Panel**	• Next meeting post election	**Noted**
8	**Consultations**	**Referendum consultations** • Response had been submitted to the Scotland Office / UK Government consultation • **ACTION** – response to be prepared for Scottish Government consultation, deadline 10 May. CH to discuss with Electoral Commission and SAA.	**CH**
10	**Any Other Business**	• Note that the ownership of Opt2Vote had changed and it was now part of the Idox Group. The Scottish Government had received assurances that this would not affect the eCounting project and that all staff would remain in place on this project.	**Noted**
11	**Dates of future meetings**	**The EMB will meet on the following dates in 2012, starting at 2pm** • 20 April 2012 • 25 May 2012 **TO BE CHANGED** • 29 June 2012 • 31 August 2012 • 28 September 2012 • 19 October 2012 • 16 November 2012 • 14 December 2012	**CH**
		Date of next meeting 20 April	