

***ARE YOU READY FOR THE NEXT
ELECTION?***

***A joint Electoral Management Board for
Scotland/Electoral Commission conference***

Glasgow City Chambers, 24 January 2019

SESSION 4

***Planning for the known
Prepared for the unknown***

Session 4: Table Top Exercise

Format: Facilitated discussion in Groups by Scottish Parliament Region, appoint someone to report back 3 key points.

Exercise 1: Planning for 2021 – the “Known” 20 minutes

Background The next scheduled electoral event in Scotland is the **Scottish Parliament Election on 6 May 2021**. The elections will be contested across **73 constituencies and 8 Parliamentary Regions**. The Convener of the EMB will probably issue directions to cover:

- **Ballot Paper Colours;**
- **Date of Publication of Notice of Election;**
- **Date of dispatch of poll cards;**
- **Date of first dispatch of postal votes;**
- **Ballot Paper numbering; and**
- **The Official Mark.**

Guidance will be made available by the Electoral Commission and support resources e.g. a model for calculating the allocation of Regional Seats will be made available by the EMB.

Scenario

It is December 2019. You have just been appointed as Chief Executive of Glen Bogle Council and find yourself Returning Officer for 3 Scottish Parliament constituencies.

Glen Bogle is within the Northern Parliamentary Region made up of 9 constituencies under a Regional Returning Officer from a neighbouring authority. The ERO provides support to all 9 constituencies.

You have no previous experience as a Returning Officer or of managing elections. You have an experienced DRO in Democratic Services, but there has been no electoral event since June 2017 and your council has lost many experienced officers since then, including some who had worked on elements of the elections. The council completed a review of polling districts and polling places in March 2019. That agreed a large number of new polling places across the constituencies. Your count usually takes place in a local sports centre that is scheduled for demolition in August 2020.

- **What are your initial actions?**
- **How will you provide strategic oversight?**
- **How will you satisfy yourself that appropriate action is being taken?**
- **Where do you seek advice?**
- **Who do you provide instruction to?**
- **What do you see as your major risks, how will you address them?**

ACTIONS /DISCUSSION

Session 4: Table Top Exercises

Format: Facilitated discussion in Regional Groups.

Exercise 2 – Prepared for the unknown

Background *It is 30 January 2019. Westminster has rejected Theresa May's Withdrawal agreement (again). The EU has stated that they are willing to reopen negotiations around some elements of the deal. The PM has indicated that she intends to extend Article 50 until end of September 2019 to allow time for these negotiations. Legal advice to government is that European Parliamentary Elections are a treaty obligation for all member states. With the extension of Article 50, this includes the UK and the EU are not prepared to suspend this responsibility. The Notice of Election will be published on 15 April with nominations starting on the following day.*

Scenario

You are Chief Executive of Glen Bogle Council, a rural area, and Returning Officer for 2 UK constituencies.

You were RO in 2017 for the polls in May and June but that was your first experience as a Returning Officer or of managing elections.

Your experienced DRO retired at the end of 2018. A replacement has been identified who has limited experience. There has been no electoral event since June 2017 and your council has lost several experienced officers since, including one senior accountant who used to oversee the count and another who organised the logistics of box transport. You currently have no contract for the printing of ballot papers or postal packs.

At your first meeting with the new DRO you are told that several of your usual polling places will be unavailable due to asbestos contamination in several Community Centres.

- What have you been doing since June 2017 in terms of planning for elections?
- What have you been doing since the start of 2019?
- What are your initial actions on hearing that there is to be a EPE in May?
- Who do you contact and why?
- What do you see as your major risks?

- How will you oversee the preparations?
- What project documentation do you already have in place? What do you need to see?
- Who are your key suppliers?

ACTIONS /DISCUSSION

Notes for Facilitators:

What if.....?

Security threat level elevated to Critical?

“Leave means leave campaign” to demonstrate at all polling places complaining about the waste of money