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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND **ACTION NOTE: Thursday 29 November 2018, 14:00**  **Chief Executive’s Board Room**  **Waverley Court, East Market Street**  **Edinburgh EH8 8BG** | | | |
| Present:   * Board Members: Malcolm Burr (MB, Convener & RO), Steve Grimmond (SG, RO), Kate Crawford (KC, ERO), Angela Leitch (AL, RO) * Advisers: Mark Conaghan (MC DRO/SOLAR rep), David Miller (DM DRO/AEA Rep), Andy O’Neill (AON Electoral Commission), Martin McKeown, (MM Electoral Commission), Maria McCann (MMc Scottish Government), Liz Ure (LU Scottish Government), James Newman (JN, Scottish Government) * In attendance: Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board/DRO) | | | |
|  |  | **NOTE** | **ACTION** |
| **1.0/2.0** | **Note of Previous Meeting**  **Apologies / Matters Arising** | * Note of 29 November EMB accepted as an accurate record with correction to item 6 to clarify canvas response rate % * **Apologies** –Andrew Kerr (AK RO), Jim Savege attended by telephone. Ian Milton (IM ERO) Dr Penny Curtis (PC Scottish Government) | **Noted** |
| **3.0/4.0** | **Discussion of North Antrim Recall Petition – led by Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland** | **Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland –** gave a briefing on her experience of delivering the first Recall Petition in North Antrim, highlighting some key lessons. These included issues around:   * Limited number of singing places; * Approach to postal notifications; * Lack of secrecy – attendance at signing place basically reveals intention; * Signing period – 6 weeks was too long; 3 or 4 weeks would have been sufficient; * Finance was adequate * Register – no opportunities to update; fixed at start of signing period. * Publicity around petition difficult while maintaining impartiality.   Ms McVea was keen in general to benefit form the experience of the EMB and of the electoral community in Scotland. She is considering establishing an “advisory panel”. **ACTION** EMB to consider how further support could be offered. | **CH** |
| **5.0** | **Electoral Commission update** | * Electoral Commission regular bulletin includes key issues for community in Scotland * ERO Performance Management discussed in the context of update on experience of canvas. Good return rates in Scotland as compared to rest of UK. * Some discussion of potential for unscheduled events. Guidance would be available on Electoral Commission website as usual should it be needed. |  |
| **6.0** | **Scottish Government Update** | * MMcC noted that the consultation on Prisoner Voting would close on 8 March there had been around 150 responses. * Franchise Bill in preparation, mainly focussed on protecting rights of EU citizens to vote. * eCount procurement for 2022 Joint Project Report. Update on progress of procurement exercise initially focussing on internal approvals within Scottish Government. Governance structure agreed with representation from councils on both Board and procurement group. Progress is positive. |  |
| **7.0** | **Scotland Office / Cabinet Office Update** | * No update provided. * EMB continues to be represented at ECAB meetings where there is Cabinet Office briefing on key current issues. * **ACTION** CH to contact Paul Docker and request regular input to EMB. | **CH** |
| **8.0** | **Electoral Registration Update** **from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | * Registers published 1 December * PVI refresh proceeding with large numbers to process following increase in postal voters registering in 2014 for the SIR now due for renewal. * Canvas reform will have effect as we move thought to 2020. Workload may decease as less action needed if there are no changes to implement. * Power of Attorney – Electoral commission guidance has changed such that PoA can now be used to register at voter but still not possible to vote on their behalf. **ACTION** Clear communication is needed around PoA and how it may be used with respect to elections. |  |
| **9.0** | **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland – Review of Islands Council areas – update from the Convener** | * The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has launched reviews of Scotland’s six island councils. * The reviews will be carried in in two stages, with public consultations for the three island-only councils, Na h-Eileanan Siar (Western Isles), Orkney and Shetland, planned for spring and summer 2019. * This will be followed by reviews of the three other councils covered by the Islands Act, Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire, which have a mixture of island and mainland wards. * The reviews will produce recommendations for the number of councillors on each council and the number and boundary of wards in each area. * New legislation under the Islands Act allows for more flexibility where a ward includes an inhabited island, with one or two member wards now possible in addition to the current multi-member wards. |  |
| **10.0** | **Consultation on Prisoner Voting (deadline 8 March 2019) – EMB Response** | * EMB response (previously circulated) approved for submission |  |
| **11.0** | **Issues Raised by RO Teams for discussion: Preparation for unscheduled events; UK Parliamentary Boundary Review; Forensic Science Training** | * General concern from DROs etc around potential for European Parliamentary Elections. Engagement needed with Cabinet Office around MRAs etc. * Request for refresher training from Police Scotland on signature verification. **ACTION** CH to contact police and arrange new training sessions; probably 2 sessions to cover all of Scotland. * UK Parliamentary Boundary Review - The four Boundary Commissions submitted their Final Recommendations to the Secretary of State on 5 September 2018, and made their reports public a week later. Leader of the House of Commons Andrea Leadsom told the House on 13 September 2018 that "it will be some time" before the necessary Statutory Instruments can be put forward for approval by both the Commons and the Lords. No further progress as yet. If changes were implemented there would be major disruption to registers, polling districts and polling arrangements in many areas that would need to be resolved prior to next UK Parliamentary election. |  |
| **12.0** | **Local Council by-elections** | * Upcoming events ([log of by-elections since May 2017](http://www.electionsscotland.info/info/5/electoral_management_board/92/log_of_council_by-elections)). Noted |  |
| **13.0** | **Promoting Resilience and Preparedness in Electoral Administration** | * Contingency and Preparation for unscheduled events – discussion generally focussed on potential for European Parliamentary elections. MB would continue to brief ROs at SOLACE and encourage an appropriate degree of preparedness. * Returning Officer and Election Team Training Event 24 January 2019 Glasgow – had been well appreciated and received. RO Mentoring Scheme (RO groupings, schedule and topics) – still to be rolled out. It was noted that some DRO level subgroups were also being set up on the initiative of local DROs. |  |
| **14.0** | **EMB Financial Statement** | * Statement noted * Draft Budget for 2019/2020 agreed to submission to Scottish Government |  |
| **15.0** | **EMB Annual Report** | * CH / MB will draft for submission to Scottish Government. |  |
| **16.0** | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / EAB / ECAB and associated meetings**  **EAB/ERRWG updates - ECAB 14 February - agenda circulated for info** | * Noted |  |
| **17.0** | **Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel (SPPPP) 8 February 2019 – agenda circulated** | * Noted |  |
| **18.0** | **AOB** | * None |  |

**Dates of Future Meetings**

Meetings are scheduled for the Thursday prior to the Friday of the Leaders meetings dates /SOLACE.

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| **25 April** | EMB Edinburgh 2pm |
| **27 June** | EMB Aberdeen 2pm hosted by Aberdeenshire Council |
| **26 September** | EMB Edinburgh 2pm |
| **28 November** | EMB Edinburgh 2pm |

The venues are currently indicated as Edinburgh (apart from the RO event and the June meeting) but may be revised depending on other issues