

ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

ACTION NOTE: Friday 25 August 2017 2pm

Chief Executive's Board Room

Waverley Court, East Market Street

Edinburgh EH8 8BG

Present:

- **Board Members:** Mary Pitcaithly (MP Convener & RO), Pete Wildman (PW ERO/SAA Rep), Kate Crawford (KC ERO/SAA Rep), Jim Savege (JS RO), Elma Murray (EM RO), Malcolm Burr (MB RO)
- **Advisers:** Gillian Taylor (GT DRO/SOLAR rep) (by telephone), David Miller (DMi DRO/AEA Rep), Dougie McGregor (DMcG e-Counting Local Government Liaison), Andy O'Neill (AON Electoral Commission), Maria McCann (MMc Scottish Government), Mette Christensen (MC Electoral Commission), Stuart Matheson (SM Scotland Office)
- **In attendance:** Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board/DRO), Fran Cattnach (FC Administrator), Dr. Carol Sweetenham (CS Electoral Commission), Barry Tudhope (North Ayrshire Council), Liz Ure (LU Scottish Government)

		NOTE	ACTION
1.0/ 2.0	Admin/Note of Previous Meeting/Matters arising etc.	<p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roddy Angus (RA Scottish Government) • David Martin (DM RO) • Ian Milton (IM ERO/SAA Rep) • Andrew Kerr (AK RO) <p>Note of Previous Meeting (26 May 2017) & Matters Arising The Action Note was accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>MP welcomed Liz Ure who has joined the Scottish Government's Elections Team with remit of looking at the Government's digital strategy and the use of IT in elections. MP welcomed Barry Tudhope who was accompanying EM to observe the role of a Chief Executive.</p>	

<p>3.0</p>	<p>UK Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) 2017</p>	<p>Electoral Commission Review</p> <p>AON explained that the Commission’s report on the UKPGE will have a new style of reporting which will be based on themes, e.g. the September theme will be public awareness and the October themes will include electoral administration and candidate experiences. The report will include recommendations for interested parties.</p> <p>Electoral Registration Review</p> <p>PW reported that overall there were two main issues from a registration point of view which were; 1) the short timescale and 2) duplicate registration applications. The latter is a risk for the future and needs addressed via social media and public messaging. Despite these issues the EROs managed the short timescale well.</p> <p>Scotland Office Review</p> <p>SM referred to the paper which was circulated after the SPPPP meeting in June which highlighted statistics relating to voter registration. SM confirmed that duplicate electoral registrations is a priority issue for the Cabinet Office to address. It became apparent to the Cabinet Office that changes in voter preferences were not duplicates so they have realised that a change to their website is required in order to address this. The Cabinet Office website is being reviewed on an ongoing basis. ACTION: FC to circulate Scotland Office paper.</p> <p>EMB Review</p> <p>CH reported that there was general agreement that the election was delivered well</p>	<p>FC</p>
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		given the tight timescale. Lessons learned will inform future EMB work programme for 2018-2021.	
4.0		<p>Scottish Government Update</p> <p>MMc thanked those who had contributed to the interviews for the E-Counting Gateway Review Number 5 which is now in draft and is a very positive report. MMc has been asked to share the report internally as a good example of partnership working. The final E-Counting Project Board is scheduled to take place w/c 28 August and Alex Mowat has prepared a Lessons Learned paper. MMc stated that Ministers were very pleased with the running of the Scottish Local Government Elections and wished to thank everyone and their teams for their hard work.</p> <p>At the next EMB meeting, MMc hopes to present on the Consultation on Electoral Reform as work currently underway. MMc hopes to be able to share the paper on an embargoed basis. Once consultation is underway for a 12-week period, the Scottish Government would welcome responses, including input from expert groups. MMc stated that as a team they are happy to visit every RO in every local authority. DMcG may organise regional meetings to aid more visits to ROs given their geographical spread. The political aspect will be collated at SPPPP meetings.</p> <p>ACTION: PW (on behalf of EROs) to consider whether visits to EROs would be beneficial and liaise with MMc.</p>	PW
5.0		<p>Electoral Registration Update</p> <p>PW reported that the canvass is ongoing and EROs are watching the pilots in Glasgow and Dumfries. Looking ahead, EROs are considering future IT requirements and working with the Scottish Government and the Cabinet Office for improvements to</p>	

		primary legislation. Following the recent acquisition of Halarose Ltd, it is currently business as usual but PW advised the Board to watch for changes.	
6.0	Improving Access to Voting for the Visually Impaired	CH informed the Board that a Cross Party Working Group has been looking for information to discuss at a meeting on 12 September. AON confirmed that the Electoral Commission will not be in attendance. CH will attend.	
7.0	Prisoner Voting Evidence Session	<p>Prompted by questions from Patrick Harvie MSP, the Equalities and Human Rights Committee are holding an evidence session on prisoner voting, the Electoral Commission, SAA and EMB have drafted written evidence. The objective is to give the Committee ideas around which they can frame their own work and an overview of key issues.</p> <p>ACTION: Following comments from the Board at this meeting, CH and PW to submit written evidence.</p> <p>EM commented on the idea of “auto-proxy” for prisoners without attestation and AON confirmed that this is covered in the submission from the Electoral Commission.</p>	CH/PW
8.0	Joint EMB/Police Scotland Seminar	<p>CH noted that after the UKPGE 2017, feedback indicated that security and threat level communication from Police Scotland to Returning Officers was poor and inconsistent hence the planning of a joint EMB/Police Scotland seminar which will take place at Tulliallan Police College on Tuesday 28 November. ACTION: FC to send invitation out to ROs, EROs and DROS.</p> <p>The morning session will be scene setting whereas the afternoon session will be table top exercises in groups. Aim of the day will be to highlight practical issues for ROs to take back to their own councils and emergency planners to incorporate into future election planning.</p>	FC

		Discussion followed about the Board’s experiences in June which included poor information flow about security. Lack of clarity about what “moving to a critical threat level” actually means in practical terms. It was noted that SPOCs may change by the next election and the Board agreed that it is not helpful when a SPOC is on annual leave on Day of Poll.	
9.0		<p>Electoral Commission Update</p> <p>AON confirmed that the Commission is on track to publish its report on the Council Elections on 6 September.</p> <p>Dr. Carol Sweetenham presented the project that she is working on which is looking at the way the Electoral Commission structures and presents its guidance. Board agreed that it would be beneficial for CS to return to the Board in the autumn once the project is complete and proposals have been formulated. MP wished CS well with the project and CS thanked the Board for inviting her to present the project. ACTION: FC to circulate to the Board a one page summary of the project.</p>	FC
10.0	EMB Financial Statement	DMcG briefly discussed the current EMB financial statement and summarised that the Board is operating within budget.	
11.0	EMB Annual Report	<p>CH informed the Board that it is a requirement to lay an Annual Report before Parliament and the current draft for 2016/17 is ready for comment. CH explained that the report covers recent electoral events as well as the work programme for the future. ACTION: CH to finalise annual report and circulate for final approval.</p> <p>EM stated that fallow years can be a risk as key personnel need to be kept up to date and some key staff will have left the local authorities by the time of the next electoral</p>	CH

		<p>event. ROs to be encouraged to monitor and maintain preparedness.</p> <p>PW raised the fact that Voter ID is being piloted in England next year so the Board needs to keep up to date with progress on this.</p> <p>GT raised the point about the need for current legislation to be flexible enough to keep pace with changes, like having an engaged electorate. GT, as Chair of SOLAR Elections Group, suggested inviting key technology players together as well as the Scottish Government to get a sense of what products they are developing for the future. MMc welcomed GT's suggestions and confirmed that the Consultation would include modernisation. ACTION: GT to progress with SOLAR Elections Group.</p>	GT
12.0	Regional Returning Officers' Group and associated meetings	No meetings have taken place to report on.	
13.0	Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel	Last meeting took place on 22 June 2017 which was very positive. It was confirmed that there will still be a UK Parliamentary Boundary Review and it will use June 2017 electoral figures as the basis. New recommendations are expected in September 2017 for use in 2022 following consideration by Secretary of State.	
14.0	AOB	<p>FOI – MP updated Board about the latest FOI about election spending. CH had circulated a suggested approach.</p> <p>RO Fees - MP informed Board that Committee may request evidence again before they make recommendations to the Government who will make any decisions.</p> <p>Impact of Islands Bill – EM raised point that the Bill may result in a partial review of Local Government wards for those councils with islands so that wards can be determined and agreed before the Council elections in 2022.</p>	

		<p>Pension Auto-Enrolment – DM raised point that guidance on this matter is required as ROs can be fined if found to fail to auto-enrol employees. Mixed messages about auto-enrolment in public domain.</p> <p>ACTION: DM to see whether Glasgow paper can be shared with the Board once completed.</p> <p>MEP Vacancy – MP has granted Belinda Don a further short extension to Wednesday 30 August at 5pm to obtain a certificate of authorisation from the Conservative Party. Failure to provide this document will mean that MP must offer the post to the next candidate on the list.</p>	<p>DM</p>
<p>15.0</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting(s)</p>	<p><i>EMB meeting scheduled for 29 September has been cancelled.</i></p> <p>ACTION: FC to reschedule meeting on October 27 as Friday afternoons are no longer suitable. <i>Meeting rescheduled for Thursday 2 November 12.30pm – 2.30pm (lunch provided from 12pm).</i></p>	<p>FC</p>