

ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND

ACTION NOTE: Friday 25 November 2016, 2pm

Octagon Room, City Chambers

Edinburgh EH1 1YJ

Present:

- **Board Members:** Mary Pitcaithly (MP Convener & RO), Pete Wildman (PW ERO), Malcolm Burr (MB RO), Jim Savege (JS RO), David Martin (DM RO), Joan Hewton (JH ERO), Elma Murray (EM RO)
- **Advisers:** Andy O'Neill (AON Electoral Commission), Stuart Matheson (SM Scotland Office), Gillian Taylor (GT DRO/SOLAR rep), Mette Christensen (MC Electoral Commission), Roddy Angus (RA Scottish Government), David Miller (DMi DRO/AEA Rep), Dougie McGregor (DMcG e-Counting Local Government Liaison), Rebecca Whyte (RW Scottish Government)
- **In attendance:** Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board/DRO), Fran Cattnach (FC Administrator), Rhydian Thomas (RT Head of Electoral Commission's Wales Office)

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| 1.0/ 2.0 | Admin/Note of Previous Meeting/Matters arising etc | <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Kerr (AK RO) • Ian Milton (IM ERO SAA representative) • Alex Mowat (AM Scottish Government) • Maria McCann (MMc Scottish Government) • Stuart Galloway (SG DRO/ERO) <p>Note of Previous Meeting (28 October 2016) & Matters Arising The Action Note was accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>Following her retiral as ERO and her resignation from the EMB, MP thanked Joan Hewton for her support and contribution to the work of the Board. It was noted that</p> | |

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| | | <p>Joan and her good humour will be missed.</p> <p>MP introduced guest Rhydian Thomas who is the Head of The Electoral Commission’s Wales Office.</p> | |
| <p>3.0</p> | <p>Scottish Local Government Elections 2017</p> | <p>Update from Scottish Government</p> <p>Legislation – Now in place with 1 or 2 changes from original draft. EM requested summary of changes given staff turnover and loss of knowledge. Question raised whether scope to address Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections in one document in Elections Bill. RW confirmed that Scottish Government is looking at how best to approach this issue.</p> <p>Update from Electoral Commission (EC)</p> <p>MC confirmed that most guidance is now published but some still under consultation and to follow. DMi requested list of which specific documents are published to make it easier for staff to consult (MC confirmed that the EA Bulletin shows when a specific document is updated, however, it is not always obvious from the website). ACTION: MC to consider and investigate.</p> <p>EC/EMB met Police Scotland who will present on Integrity at the Joint EC/EMB briefing on 12 Jan. Police Scotland will update handbook and there will be a Police briefing for SPOCs in February.</p> <p>AON stated that the creative development phase for voter awareness is underway. Head of Campaigns and Corporate Communications at The Electoral Commission, Emma Hartley, will present at the next EMB meeting in January. AON confirmed that there will be a large one day campaign launch on 1 March but that the launch phase</p> | <p>MC</p> |

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| | | <p>will continue throughout the whole of March. PW confirmed that the EROs are comfortable with the EC timescales.</p> <p>Registration Update</p> <p>PW gave update on Electoral Registration. Registers are due to be published on 1 Dec and they will be based on new boundaries where possible. Some publication will be delayed, due to by-elections for example, so these will be published on 1 Feb. Data is due to be uploaded to printers on or around 1 March for poll cards. Discussion followed about attainers who turn 16 years of age after 1 Dec and who will then only appear on the printed version on the day of poll (but who are actually on the register as of 1 Dec).</p> <p>Update from EMB</p> <p>Proposed Final Directions from Convener of EMB</p> <p>CH confirmed that no further comments received about the Directions once they were issued which was probably due to prior knowledge obtained from the consultation period.</p> <p>Performance Management</p> <p>As stated previously, the Convener’s Directions will impose a Performance Management Framework (PMF) for ROs. CH stated that the aim is to avoid duplication with EC data collection and that it has the aim of combining both data collection requests in a single document. It is likely that forms will be sent out in February and March via survey monkey. ACTION: MC to distribute questions in advance so that ROs</p> | <p>MC</p> |
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| | | <p>can collate requested data before starting survey.</p> <p>MP confirmed that there will also be a small random sample of councils for increased scrutiny who will be asked to provide further information, e.g. project plans, to provide further assurance to the Convener. It was confirmed that DMcG is working on the collation of relevant information at the end of nominations and from results. All results will be collated on a national basis and displayed on the EMB website.</p> <p>E-Counting</p> <p>DMcG reported that all 32 local authorities had signed the CGI contract by the deadline. There are four by-elections due to take place before the Local Government elections which will use e-counting. JS stated that use of e-counting went well recently in Aberdeenshire and reported lower levels of adjudication than previously. DMi confirmed this was also true at the Glasgow by-election.</p> <p>DMi raised point that polling staff need trained to try and address any errors on ballot papers with voters at the polling station. ACTION: EC/EMB to include this and adjudication of doubtful papers at EC/EMB Joint Briefing in January.</p> <p>To ensure consistency across count halls and across Scotland, there is a need to raise awareness of reasons for rejection of ballot papers and to show similar examples with the corresponding reason for rejection and which category of rejection. ACTION: EC/EMB to ensure time scheduled at the briefing event to cover consistency in categories of rejected ballot papers.</p> <p>DMcG reported that e-counting training dates for all local authorities will be allocated shortly as currently only the 13 largest authorities without dates. DMcG is also</p> | <p>EC/EMB</p> <p>EC/EMB</p> |
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| | | <p>working on improving the online portal and training manual.</p> <p>CH distributed the draft print schedule and confirmed that CGI has been involved and is aware of the dates in the schedule. Discussion took place about whether there should be an interim data upload and the consequent cost per postal vote. Board agreed that an interim upload would be in the interest of the voter thus it was agreed that there will be one. ACTION: AM to try to negotiate reduced price per postal pack with supplier for interim data upload.</p> <p>CH confirmed that a Print Group has been set up to ensure quality and consistency of print products across Scotland and CH confirmed that a complete set of documents will be produced in the same style at the same time. ACTION: DMcG to circulate documents to EMB once finalised.</p> <p>MP enquired about the Forms Group who met in September. ACTION: CH to obtain update from Aileen Knudsen from the Forms Working Group.</p> | <p>AM</p> <p>DMcG</p> <p>CH</p> |
| <p>4.0</p> | <p>Other Electoral Events/ Issues</p> | <p>Boundary Commission Recommendations - UK Parliamentary Boundary Review – consultation is underway until January. ACTION: CH to mention in EMB response that there is concern that the new constituencies are based on old wards.</p> <p>Consultation on draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill MP thanked AON for submitting the EC response which was published on 24 November. ACTION: CH to draft brief letter stating that the EMB has nothing further to add to the EC response.</p> <p>Local Government and Communities Committee Inquiry into Payments to Returning Officers Discussion about hearing on 23 Nov and subsequent one on 30 Nov where several</p> | <p>CH</p> <p>CH</p> |

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| | | <p>people will give evidence (Malcolm Burr, Chair, SOLACE Scotland; Mary Pitcaithly, Convener, Electoral Management Board for Scotland; Annemarie O'Donnell, Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council; Andy Hunter, Chair, Scotland and Northern Ireland Branch, Association of Electoral Administrators; Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance, Electoral Commission, Scotland).</p> <p>Scotland Office – Publishing Costs of Elections</p> <p>The EMB was recently notified by the Cabinet Office that, to promote a transparency in electoral administration, there were plans to publish detailed breakdowns of the costs of national elections, beginning with the 2014 European Parliamentary poll. The Cabinet Office shared the figures that were to be published and asked for comments from the EMB.</p> <p>The proposal was discussed and there were concerns raised about the figures that were to be used in their current form as they may generate some confusion and as a result may prompt questions from journalists and other commentators. It was noted that the EMB is very supportive of transparency in all elements of electoral administration.</p> <p>SM believed that the figures were due to be published w/c 28 Nov and agreed to feed back EMB comments to the Cabinet Office. Board requested whether data could be presented in a more meaningful way, perhaps with headings as no context otherwise. ACTION: DMcG to circulate brief analysis of Scottish data to EMB after meeting and also possibly to ROs.</p> | <p>DMcG</p> |
| 5.0 | EMB Role and Resources | EMB Financial Statement – noted with no change in overall position since last update. | |

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| 6.0 | Regional Returning Officers' Group and associated meetings | <p>Next Electoral Advisory Board meeting will take place on 6 December 2016.</p> <p>The Elections & Registrations Working Group is scheduled to meet on the 11 January 2017.</p> | |
| 7.0 | Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel | <p>Next meeting will take place on 5 December 2016.</p> <p>Party Conferences EM volunteered to attend Labour Party conference in Perth on Sat 25 Feb 2017. Representative needed to attend Conservative Party Conference – date TBC.</p> | |
| 8.0 | Electoral Commission/EMB Joint Briefing Event | <p>MP thanked DMi for providing accommodation for event on 12 Jan 2017. Draft agenda agreed. ACTION: Electoral Commission to send out invites and agenda w/c 28 Nov to ROs and senior officers.</p> | EC |
| 9.0 | AOB | None | |
| 10.0 | Date of Next Meeting | 27 January 2017 | |
| Date of future meetings: 24 February and 31 March 2017 | | | |
| Provisional dates of future 2017 meetings: 21 April, 30 June, 25 August, 29 September, 27 October and 24 November | | | |