|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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), Dr Penny Curtis (PC Scottish Government), 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 27 Sept EMB accepted as an accurate record * **Apologies** – Elma Murray (EM RO) Andrew Kerr (AK RO), David Martin (DM RO) Ian Milton (IM ERO), Pete Wildman (PW ERO/SAA Rep) * DM noted that Glasgow were preparing to lodge caveats in the various courts to cover potential challenges from prisoners should there be elections. **ACTION** ALL ROs/EROs should be considering the same action to ensure that their caveats are current. | **Noted**  **CH** |
| **3.0** | **Electoral Commission Update** | **Electoral Commission** [**report on North Antrim recall petition**](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/2018-recall-petition-in-north-antrim)  It was noted that the Electoral Commission report was a helpful reminder of the process and key stages. Virginia McVea – the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland would be invited to a future meeting of the EMB, probably in February 2019.  MM drew attention to the [Electoral Commission response](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/publications/consultations-and-responses/response-to-the-uk,-scottish-and-welsh-governments-policy-statement-proposals-for-reform-of-the-annual-canvass) to the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments’ policy statement: proposals for reform of the annual canvass published Friday 30 November.  There was some discussion of the continuing situation around Brexit and the political implications of the current position.  **Police Scotland SPOC Seminar - 29 October (Joint with EMB) – (*agenda circulated for info*)**  Successful delivery of the seminar was noted with representation form the SPOCs in all of the Police Scotland divisions. Lessons from the UKPGE in 2017 were noted and the need for clear written communications were expressed especially in the context of enhanced security threats. | **CH / AON** |
| **4.0** | **Scottish Government Update** | **Update on progress of proposed Bills**  MMcC noted that work was continuing on a number of Bills following the Scottish Government’s consultation exercise earlier in the year. Electoral Administration Bill should be introduced in the new year. Franchise Bill also in preparation. Consultation on Prisoner Voting to be launched before Christmas.  **eCount procurement for 2022**  Proposed timetable was recirculated amended to take account of comments made at previous EMB. Aim to issue ITT by end of 2019 which means a large amount of preparatory work will be needed through 2019.  Procurement specialist has been identified within Scottish Government. There are a number of key issues that need to be resolved to support he procurement, including   * Incorporating lessons of 2017 * Nature of the contact – i.e. comprehensive (including print) or in separate lots, VAT position etc * Introduction of innovations * Lifetime (beyond 2022)   Issues around Governance of Procurement and overall project were discussed where some decision on content is needed. These included legal issues e.g. around the fact that contracts are with Councils but for ROs; the EMB role in project board and on User Group etc.  Appointment of EMB consultant – for local authority liaison - was discussed with Board affirming the need for experienced and continuity given recent turnover of staff and loss of experience. Potential appointment was to be pursued.  It was agreed that the weekly bulletin was a valuable resource and should be repeated but starting much earlier in the procurement process.  **ACTION** EMB needs to identify appropriate individuals to participate in user groups and boards.  **Accessibility of Elections**  A number of seminars had been held with stakeholders, 3 with those with sight loss and 2 with those with learning difficulties. 2 more of each remain to be held at different locations around the country. Focus has been on examining user journey’s around registration, getting information and voting. Interesting findings in lien with previous intelligence, some broad negative experience, although not uniformly bad.  A number of ideas have been identified for further investigation. These are not all digital. Ideas will be developed and “Ranked” in a matrix of how they improve experience while supporting integrity. Aim is to submit report to Minister shortly.  Range of consistent issues have arisen – e.g. requests for video /audio support in polling places, use of email or telephone voting, consistent attitude to guide dogs, full use of TVDs. It was noted also that not every potential adjustment is “reasonable”. Any innovations would need to be tested.  Ultimately these voters simply want to be able to vote independently. **ACTION** LU continuing to work with small group to develop options to take to Minister. |  |
| **5.0** | **Scotland Office/Cabinet Office Update** | No update provided  **ACTION** CH to draft letter for MB to send to Cabinet Office noting lack of input recently to EMB discussions | **CH** |
| **6.0** | **Electoral Registration Update** **from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | **Response to Joint Policy Statement on the Reform of the Annual Canvass**  Response from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA was noted. **ACTION** – EMB would write to Government endorsing the content of the SAA response rather than submit a separate response.  **Canvass 2018 – update**  New registers would be published on 1 December as planned. Response rate around the country has averaged 82% across Scotland. Emphasised aspiration increasingly to shift channels to alternative ways of response.  **Postal Vote Refresh – uniform date**  All EROs would be initiating their PV refresh on the same date – week commencing 7 January 2019. | **CH** |
| **7.0** | **Local Council by-elections** | The [log of by-elections since May 2017](http://www.electionsscotland.info/info/5/electoral_management_board/92/log_of_council_by-elections) was noted, with Highland (6 December) and Dumfries and Galloway( 13 December) still to be concluded. Electoral Commission likely to observe both of these.  A number of issues had been identified by election teams across the country around by-elections some of which had been escalated to the EMB for information / action. Some concerns around performance of printers and mail. **ACTION** CH to revisit after these final by-elections and identify any action needed. |  |
| **8.0** | **Promoting Resilience and Preparedness in Electoral Administration** | **Returning Officer and Election Team Training Event 24 January 2019 Glasgow – (*draft agenda circulated*)**  Draft agenda noted and agreed. It was agreed that the event was an important opportunity to ensure that all ROs especially those newer in post were aware of their personal responsibilities. Afternoon session of scenario planning/desktop exercises is key and will need careful planning, grouping ROs and EROs appropriately. **ACTION** MB to stress importance of event at SOLACE, CH/AON to finalise arrangements for those to be asked to participate.  **RO Mentoring Scheme (*RO groupings, schedule and topics)***  Draft proposals tabled and discussed. EMB broadly supportive of proposals. **ACTION** CH to develop proposals more for MB to present on 24 January. It was noted that all ROs also need to make allowance for succession planning of election team and of Chief Officers who may be aspiring ROs and need exposure to election issues. |  |
| **9.0** | **Round Table meeting with AEA 27 November 2019** | * Noted * Different roles of the various stakeholders – AEA, EMB, Electoral Commission, SOLAR, SAA etc were discussed. * Agreement was to maintain open communication between groups. AEA keen to offer whatever support would be appreciated. Also AEA plan to ensure that their foundation courses adequately reflect the situation in Scotland, where election rules and legislation may differ. |  |
| **10.0** | **EMB Financial Statement** | * Noted * Costs of 24 January seminar still to be included. |  |
| **11.0** | **EMB Membership update** | * Angela Leitch new RO member was formally welcomed. * Mark Conaghan new adviser representing the SOLAR Elections Working Group, replacing Gillian Taylor also formally welcomed |  |
| **12.0** | **Future schedule of meetings / venues** | * Meetings proposed on the Thursday prior to the Friday of the Leaders meetings dates in February, April, June September and November 2019 * June meeting to be held in Aberdeen, hosted by Aberdeenshire. * Note that schedule would change if there was an unscheduled electoral event. |  |
|  | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / EAB and associated meetings** | **EAB/ERRWG updates - ERRWG 8 November (agenda circulated for info)**   * Noted. |  |
| **13.0** | **Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel** | **Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel 23 October 2018 – agenda circulated for info**   * Noted |  |
| **14.0** | **AOB** | * None |  |

**Dates of Future Meetings**

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **24 January** | RO Training Event – “*Are you ready for the next election?*”  Glasgow |
| **21 February** | EMB Edinburgh 2pm |
| **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