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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND **ACTION NOTE: 2PM 24 February 2021**  ***HELD BY MS TEAMS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS*** | | | | |
| Present:   * Board Members: Malcolm Burr (MB, Convener & RO), Pete Wildman (PW ERO), Steve Grimmond (SG RO), Kenneth Lawrie (KL, RO), Andrew Kerr (AK RO), Ian Milton (IM ERO), Kate Crawford (KC ERO), Joyce White (JW RO) * Advisers: Dr Penny Curtis (PC Scottish Government), Mark Conaghan (MC DRO/SOLAR rep), David Miller (DM DRO/AEA Rep), Andy O’Neill (AON Electoral Commission), Martin McKeown, (MM Electoral Commission), Catherine Heggie (KH, Electoral Commission), Paul Docker (PD Cabinet Office). Iain Hockenheim (IH, Scottish Government), James Newman (JN Scottish Government), Sarah Mackie (SM Electoral Commission) * In attendance: Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board/DRO), Supt Gerry Corrigan (Police Scotland) | | | | |
|  |  | | **NOTE** | **ACTION** |
| **1.0/2.0** | **Note of Previous Meeting (27 January 2021)**  **Apologies / Matters Arising** | | * Noted and accepted as an accurate record except for points below;   + Note that Kenneth Lawrie was not in attendance at the previous December meeting, note to be revised * Letters of appointment of RO members still to be updated to include responsibility to deputise for the Convener in circumstances of their temporary incapacity **ACTION** MB | **Noted**  **MB** |
| **3.0** | | **Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021** | **Briefing to Minister and MSPs 18 February 2021**  Useful meeting with Minister, Party leaders and others to brief on preparations. No calls to postpone. Major issues of concern were scrutiny at the count given limited numbers in attendance and activity outside polling places. Both dealt with below.  **Further Advice to Ministers on the need for multiple days of poll**  Noted.  **Activity outside polling places**  Not primarily an RO issue if outside polling place, but to be dealt with at briefings with candidates and agents. Tellers to be discouraged. Electoral Commission guidance campaigning to follow which will reflect Scottish Government guidance.  There have been queries on use of A boards. This is an issue for local decision based on Council policy. RO will need to consider Covid measures outside polling places, signage, place markers for queues etc.  **Scrutiny of count processes / Attendance at the count**  Paper circulated for comment. Key issue is implementation of 2m distancing and the consequences for the capacity of the hall and the potential for scrutiny. Range of measures suggested – layout, flor markings, flick checks, rotas, digital projection of images at adjudication etc (e.g. via Teams meeting) . Issue needs to be addressed at Candidate/Agents Briefings. Candidates need to act as a collective. Consistency is to be promoted but it is accepted that there will be different solutions appropriate for different contexts. RO guests unlikely.  **ACTION** CH to revise paper. The count will be different from usual, there will not be as much opportunity to observe, there will be fewer people in the room, there may be different set ups in each venue. But every effort to provide effective scrutiny.  **Media at Count**  Discussions underway with BBC and STV. Proposal to limit use of stringers via tweeting photos of result sheets with agreed hashtag. General media concern around timing of counts – probably no rolling coverage.  **Testing of staff etc**  Note that Minister has suggested that Lateral Flow Testing could be made available to election staff to add reassurance with respect to safety of the count events. Logistical challenges noted if on the day of the count. Concern that if there is not consistency ROs could be picked off MB has been in discussion with unions via COSLA with respect to safety of the event. **ACTION** – discussions to continue with Scottish Government and with ROs. Views of ROs to be assessed initially and advice taken from PHS.  Minister had written a letter of thanks to ROs and EROs. **ACTION** MB to cascade to ROs and EROs.  **Additional Directions to ROs from the Convener of the EMB**  Allocation of voters to polling stations – ROs have been providing justifications to EMB where they have allocated more than 800 in person voters to polling places. Process is continuing. Focus is on limiting the potential for queues or congestion in polling places.  Count timing; scheduling of count – current position circulated but revisions continuing as plans become more definite.  **Registration update including report on postal vote numbers**  Statistics will be reported at 1 March with note of postal vote numbers then updated weekly for circulation to Ministers etc. HNLs issued as planed and TV advert campaign undertaken as previously intimated. All EROs have contingency in place to cope with anticipated volumes of applications.  Note some software issues in EMS systems that have had to be addressed by EROs which have caused some delays in processing.  There has been confusion generated in some areas with Scottish Conservatives adopting “primaries” to select regional candidates. Also concern over website [www.postalvote.scot](http://www.postalvote.scot) which directs to SNP home page.  General status is “on track but busy.  IM noted that the CMO letter to shielders had been issued today.  **Joint January Event Briefing Event & Follow up actions**  **ACTION** noted  **Updated Risk Register**  **ACTION** – all encouraged to review and propose updates where needed.  **Police Scotland support for ROs and EROS – Supt Gerry Corrigan, National SPOC**  Note that CH and AON are attending Silver command meetings with Police Scotland SPOCs. All operation orders in place and all SPOCs are engaging with ROs.  With respect to policing of polling places, will be following usual 4 E’s approach with enforcement as the final option. Police will provide security advice to candidates and agents. Material will be supplied to ROs to issue to candidates.  **Fees and Charges Order – update from Scottish Government**  Paper circulated for comment. General position is a 50% uplift. **ACTION** – any additional comments to be given to MMcC as soon as possible.  **ERO Seminar with Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (**CPNI)  Useful meeting. Concern that VJBs not always in the loop with respect to such briefings. This now is resovled.  Similar to be considered for ROs, specifically tailored to their needs. **ACTION** CH MMcC to discuss.  **Forms Working Group**  Note that full suite of forms had been supplied by the group led by Aileen Knudsen. Material now posted on EMB website. **ACTION** AK to be thanked for her leadership and detailed work in producing this excellent resource. | **CH**  **ALL**  **MB**  **CH**  **ALL**  **CH MMCC**  **CH** |
| **4.0** | **Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 5 May 2022** | | **eCount for 2022 Scottish Local Government Elections**  Update circulated. Stage 1 complete with aim to complete Stage 2 testing in June. Covid situation has added difficulties to the process but currently no major concern. | **JL** |
| **5.0** | **Referendum Guidance** | | Noted that guidance is around 80% complete but will now be paused until after the election. | **CH** |
| **6.0** | **Local Government By-elections -** | | Paper showing list of by-elections scheduled for March was circulated. All ROs are currently proceeding with preparations with no intention to postpone. This will be monitored by EMB with additional support offered. Lessons from October/November by-elections have been very useful. | **CH**  **AON** |
| **7.0** | **Scottish Government Update** | | Note that Scottish Government are offering to identify civil service staff who may be available to support ROs as staff at the election. Names to be collected and passed to ROs.  Note that there has been an amendment to position with respect to Emergency Proxies allowing change to proxy on the day. Equivalent to the change in England and Wales. This should be the final piece of legislation for the election.  PW queried with respect to the indemnity position for EROs given that Scottish Government were providing indemnity for ROs **ACTION** MMcC to investigate. | **MMCC** |
| **8.0** | **Electoral Commission General Update** | | Guidance is nearly complete. Changes are being highlighted to ROs teams as they are finalised.  Meetings are scheduled with ROs and EROs with respect to performance standards.  EC are attending as observers at by-elections.  Early engagement with Candidates and Agents is being encouraged given the range of changes for this event.  With respect to public awareness several initiatives noted including, Welcome to your vote week, support for refugees and an accessible / simple English version of material.  AON noted that there were a range of new parties and new descriptions. **ACTION** CH to communicate to ROs ensuring that most up to date registration details are used at nomination.  Voter attitude survey to be repeated. | **CH** |
| **9.0** | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | | Key issues covered above. |  |
| **10.0** | **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland update** | | Written report circulated |  |
| **11.0** | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / ECAB and associated meetings / SPPP** | | ECAB discussions focussing on issues around England and Wales but many of the same challenges. Scotland’s experience of by-elections very helpful and lessons circulated to colleagues across GB.  SPPP to be held 4 March |  |
| **12.0** | **AEA Branch Update** | | No update provided. All issues dealt with elsewhere in the meeting. |  |
| **13.0** | **EMB Membership** | | No update |  |
| **14.0** | **Any other business** | | None |  |

**Dates of Future Meetings until May 2021**

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| **2pm: 24 March 28 April** |