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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND**ACTION NOTE: 2PM 24 MARCH 2021*****HELD BY MS TEAMS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS*** |
| Present: Chris Highcock (Secretary), Malcolm Burr (Convener), Catherine Heggie (Scottish Government Adviser), Steve Grimmond (Member RO), Joyce White (Member, RO), Mark Conaghan (SOLAR adviser), Ian Milton (Member ERO), Kate Crawford (Member ERO), James Newman (Scottish Government Adviser), Maria McCann (Scottish Government adviser), Peter Wildman (Member ERO), Kenneth Lawrie (Member RO), Andrew Kerr (Member RO), Jim Savege (Member RO), Paul Docker (UK Government Adviser), Andy O’Neill (Electoral Commission adviser), Martin McKeown (Electoral Commission adviser), Kenneth Pentland (Scottish Government adviser), David Miller (AEA representative),Supt Gerry Corrigan (Police Scotland) |
|  |  | **NOTE** | **ACTION** |
| **1.0/2.0** | **Note of Previous Meeting (24 March 2021)****Apologies / Matters Arising** | * Noted and accepted as an accurate record except for points below;
	+ Joyce White was not in attendance, minute to be amended
* Apologies – Penny Curtis, Ian Hockenhull
 | **Noted** |
| **3.0** | **Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021** | **Briefing to Minister and Party Business Managers 22 March 2021*** Generally positive and supportive meeting. No issues of concern raised by politicians.

**Scrutiny of count processes –position paper published*** Paper had been circulated to SPPPP and to ROs. No particular comment but it is anticipated that there will be concerns from parties at limited opportunity for sampling, which may be expressed as concerns about scrutiny.

**Testing of count staff** * Noted position of the 32 ROs with respect to LFTs – 10 looking to adopt testing and 22 not wishing to. DPH and PHS advice generally that it is not required but that it could add an element of additional reassurance although the protection is provided by the distancing, ventilation etc. Various views expressed among the EMB but ultimately a decision for the CRO and to be influenced by local factors and current position with respect to infections.

**Allocation of voters to polling stations** * No revision to position. Polling allocations now more or less fixed.

**Count timing; scheduling of count*** Noted although analysis remains somewhat fluid. Count scheduling is being revised as planning continues.
* DM noted that with counts on a Friday, facilities may have to be offered for prayers for Muslim candidates.

 **Registration update including report on postal vote numbers** * PW noted that all is proceeding smoothly. The HNL and other communication seem to have been successful in bringing forward the bulk of new applications for postal votes. The final numbers will be compiled for release based on the 8 April (SIENA) figures following the 6 April deadline.
* Royal Mail had noted the impact of the Easter weekend and bank holidays on their collections. **ACTION** clear messaging needed in these final days that applications need to be received by 5pm on 6/4, not any later. Date of posting is irrelevant.
* PW and CH are meeting Rachel Winham form Royal Mail weekly. It has been stressed that deliveries to EROs need to be prioritised in the lead up to registration deadlines.

**Risk Register** * Noted as under review and to be revised.

**Police Scotland support for ROs and EROS – Supt Gerry Corrigan, National SPOC*** General positive update on support from Police Scotland for ROs and EROs in planning for the election. DM noted that in Glasgow there were some concerns with respect to extremists at the counts but no major issues.
* Security advice for candidates had been provided by Police Scotland and circulated to ROs to be cascaded to candidates.

**Fees and Charges Order – update from Scottish Government*** Scottish Government would be issuing guidance on advances and claim forms in early April.
 | **Noted****Noted****Noted****Noted****ALL** |
| **4.0** | **Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 5 May 2022** | * eCount project proceeding with no major concerns. More detailed update via project board post election

**eCounting 2022*** Stage 2 of the project commenced on 08 February 2021. This stage, which will continue until mid-July, will see remote testing of the system initially and then move on to hands-on testing from the end of May. The latter will take place at the Project’s accommodation in Silvan House in Edinburgh.
* The Project Board has agreed to a slightly reduced testing programme which will enable hands-on testing to be undertaken while social distancing measures remain in place. This may mean some larger Councils will be advised to split their counts – as Glasgow and Edinburgh already do – and discussions with these will take place after the SP election.

**Conduct Order*** We have begun work on the Order and will consult on changes after the Scottish Parliament Election has taken place
 | **Noted** |
| **5.0** | **Local Government By-elections -**  | * Scheduled noted
* All recent by-elections through March had gone smoothly. All ROs and their teams had found them helpful exercises and reassuring in terms of being opportunities for testing processes in preparation for 6 May.
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| **6.0** | **Scottish Government Update** | **Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) Amendment (Coronavirus) Order 2021*** The Scottish Parliament (Elections etc.) Amendment (Coronavirus) Order 2021 was laid on 17 February and agreed by the Parliament on Wednesday 17 March 2021. The Order was signed by the Minister on Monday 22 March and that came into force on 23 March 2021.

**Lateral Flow Testing for those attending the Count*** Returning Officers will be able to access asymptomatic tests for all those attending their local count, if they wish. Advice on this will be issued shortly.

**Staffing at the Scottish Parliament Election May 2021*** Over 150 notes of interest from civil servants who wish to work as poll or count staff have been passed on to Returning Officers.

**Fees and Charges Order*** The Fees and Charges Order is expected to be signed on 24 March 2021. Advice will then be issued about advances and claims.

**Indemnity*** A letter of indemnity has been issued to Returning Officers.

**Postal voting*** Electoral Registration Officers have been given additional funding to increase capacity to process postal votes of up to 50% of the electorate (21% as of 22 March).
* The Chief Medical Officer has also written to all of those on the shielding list, in consultation with the Electoral Commission, advising of voting options for those who are eligible to vote and members of their households.
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| **7.0** | **Electoral Commission General Update**  | * No major issues to add not already addressed earlier in the meeting.
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| **8.0**  | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | * All issued covered earlier in the meeting.
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| **9.0** | **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland update** | * No update.
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| **11.0** | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / ECAB and associated meetings / SPPP** | * ECAB to meet weekly in the lead up to the election to monitor issues in election preparation across the UK
* SPPP – no major issues. Parties content with current preparations.
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| **12.0** | **AEA Branch Update** | * No update
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| **13.0** | **EMB Membership** | * No update
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| **14.0** | **Any other business** | * None
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**Dates of Future Meetings until May 2021**

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| **2pm: 28 April** |