

**ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND**

**ACTION NOTE: 29 May 2012 4:00pm**

**City of Edinburgh Council HQ**

**Present:**

- **Board members:** Mary Pitcaithly (MP Convener & RO), Brian Byrne (BB ERO, SAA rep), Joan Hewton (JH ERO), David Anderson (DA RO) Gordon Blair (GB DRO SOLAR rep) Douglas Gillespie (DG ERO)
- **Advisers:** Andy O’Neill (AON Electoral Commission) David Freeland (DF Electoral Commission) Alex Thomson (AT Scottish Government Consultant) Andy Sinclair (AS Scottish Government) Steve Sadler (SS Scottish Government) Roddy Angus (RA Scotland Office)
- **In attendance:** Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board DRO)

		<b>NOTE</b>	<b>ACTION / RESPONSIBLE</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Billy Pollock (WP DRO AEA rep)</li> <li>• Jon Harris (JH COSLA),</li> <li>• Bob Jack (RJ RO),</li> <li>• Malcolm Burr, (MB RO)</li> <li>• Stuart Galloway (SG DRO)</li> <li>• Sue Bruce (SB RO)</li> </ul>	<b>Noted</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Note of Previous Meeting (20 April 2012)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepted as an accurate record with the following amendments                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Page 3 – Postal Votes, Bullet Point 2; remove las t 2 sentences and replace with “Given the fixed dates for elections, revising legal deadlines to be earlier than -11 would be in the interest of the voter and remove unnecessary time pressures”</li> <li>○</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Noted</b>

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
3	Review of Scottish Local Government Elections 3 May 2012	<p><b>Registration Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only concerns were with respect to the timetable which still creates pressures around registration deadlines.</li> </ul> <p><b>Nominations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aberdeen City issue with respect to electoral fraud and attempt to nominate a mannequin.</li> <li>• <b>ACTION</b> – EMB to recommend that nomination rules are reconsidered to prevent such abuse of the system, e.g. they could require proof of identity or nomination papers to be submitted by candidate</li> <li>• <b>Issues had also been discussed by SOLAR Working Group. ACTION</b> CH to circulate action note from SOLAR to the EMB</li> </ul> <p><b>Ballot Paper Production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All were impressed with the quality of the papers and the early delivery.</li> <li>• Note the complexities which arose from the multiplicity of suppliers with respect to postal vote mailers. There were concerns around this but following workshop initiated by one of the suppliers (Adare) issues were resolved. Significant process testing was required.</li> <li>• Note also issue in Dundee with respect to BP numbering and confusion around leading 0000 in the numbers</li> <li>• <b>ACTION</b> – EMB to recommend that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Postal vote mailers should have been centralised as part of contract</li> <li>○ System testing of eCount system should have involved live ballot papers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>CH</p> <p>CH</p> <p>CH</p>

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		<p><b>Forms and Notices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No comments – Aileen Knudsen and the Forms Group were recognised for their hard work in creating a useful set of forms for consistent use across Scotland</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Polling</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no identified systematic issues with respect to polling. Staff across the country were consistent in the messages that they gave to voters with respect to the use of numbers.</li> <li>• There was some concern expressed that due to the instructions on the paper many voters only used the numerals 1,2,3</li> <li>• It was also noted that the style of campaigning by parties varied across the country and may have had some impact on the way in which ballot papers were completed</li> <li>• The Electoral Commission had collected a range of data on polling and this would be analysed and addressed in their report</li> </ul> <p><b>Polling Materials / Ballot Boxes / seals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EMB agreed that the Ballot Boxes were finalised too late in the preparations for the election. They did the job required, but they could have been a lot better.</li> <li>• The security seals that were issued caused further concerns and confusion. They were issued very late in the process after most polling staff had been trained. Some ROs did not use them at all. The final boxes supplied were better than the prototypes so there was less of a need for the seals, but all this confusion could have been avoided had final prototypes been available earlier.</li> </ul>	

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		<p><b>Postal Voting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postal Vote Mailers – as noted above the use of different contractors for the production of mailers from those making the ballot papers was unfortunate and introduced levels of complexity that were unnecessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EROs in these circumstances had to supply two sets of data to different contractors.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• These issues could have been anticipated in the eCounting contract and defined in the specification at the procurement stage</li> <li>• Royal Mail – performed well. There were a few local issues, but overall there were no major concerns at the service that they provided.</li> <li>• AVI checking – data on rejection rates is still to be analysed and has been reported to the Electoral Commission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EMB believes that more RO discretion is needed to accept PVS where there is an error in the AVIs, especially around mismatches within households</li> <li>○ There are also arguments for enhanced follow up of those whose AVI has been rejected. There are practical issues with this however and the systems involved vary across the country.</li> <li>○ EMB concerns remain regarding the level of AVI rejections, but the balance needs to be recognised that the purpose is to address fraud.</li> <li>○ Note that there will be a signature refresh shortly, but that this needs to be sequenced appropriately with the pressures of the introduction of IER</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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		<p><b>The Count</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, all counts went well in terms of logistics and electronic systems</li> <li>• Count Timing – the Friday count was essential to the timely delivery of the counts given the systems in place.. There were no negative comments from any politicians nor from the media. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The stakeholder consultation and the subsequent direction from the Convener with respect to Count Timing was widely appreciated.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Count Staff Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff training was generally done well and effectively. There were concerns from some ROs about the venues and the capacity of the training (e.g. very large counts had to train staff over 2 or 3 days so the full staff team were not trained together)</li> <li>• Pentland House was an effective venue</li> </ul> <p><b>eCount Project Board</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Project Board had played a key role in the management of the eCounting project, but did not have a high profile. This was not necessarily a problem, but there may have been some confusion over roles given the involvement of EMB, Scottish Government and the eCounting project <b>Board in the procurement and management of the contract</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Logica / Scottish Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Logica had been an excellent contractor. There were none of the problems that were experienced in the equivalent elections in 2007. Their project planning and work with the 32 RO was very well done.</b></li> <li>• <b>Scottish Government Support was well appreciated and well managed.</b></li> </ul>	

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		<p>The weekly FAQ communications that were introduced towards the end of the project were very useful and well designed.</p> <p><b>eCounting System</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were minor “glitches” at some counts. Glasgow and East Renfrewshire both experienced slow downs in the system and Glasgow had an incident in which ballots from one box were not counted.</li> <li>• These incidents have been investigated. A report was to be submitted to Glasgow Council to explain the issue, its cause and the implications. The proper use of verification reports should have prevented this error, and it seems that there was a combination of human and technical/system errors</li> <li>• East Renfrewshire issue was also dealt with openly and quickly and was well managed; test papers used to configure the system ended up in the count. ACTION – options to prevent this from happening again need to be considered – e.g. test papers in a different colour.</li> <li>• A Logica report is expected regarding the East Renfrewshire issues</li> <li>• East Dunbartonshire also experienced a slow down of processing</li> <li>• There were questions as to the usefulness of the First Preference Bar Chart that was displayed and the reasons for its removal at 80% completion.</li> <li>• The Dynamic Floor Plan was not popular or well used and took up a screen that could have been used to show other more useful information</li> </ul> <p><b>Adjudication of Doubtful Papers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process of adjudication took a long time. The placemat and guidance from both Electoral Commission and EMB was well received and well used.</li> <li>• There is a perceived issues with respect to the ordering of candidates on</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ecounting Project Board Scottish Gov</p>

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		<p>the ballot paper with those nearer the top apparently being more likely to be elected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This had been considered by the Scottish Government in their consultation on the design of the paper but in the event there was no change from the current alphabetical arrangement</li> <li>○ Change would require advocacy from the Parties and they do not seem to be concerned</li> </ul> <p><b>Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● While these were local elections to 32 separate councils, there was a desire from the Scottish Government and from the media for some national figures including turnout and first preferences for the major parties. No one had the responsibility to produce such figures.</li> <li>● ACTION – this could be built into the specification for a future system.</li> </ul> <p><b>Post Election Data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Note that there is a potential move from government to require the release of full preference information on voting. This would require secondary legislation but the system has generated this data and it could be accessed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Note that many councils have now banned posters on street furniture, so that there is less general awareness of the election. There is a perception that this has impacted on Turnout given the reduced awareness of the polls.</li> <li>● Electoral Commission report will also address issues of public awareness.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Counting Project Board Scottish Gov</b></p>

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		<p><b>Electoral Commission RO Performance Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Performance Standard monitoring regime for these elections seemed to have been successful and well managed. The results will be published and commented on by the Electoral Commission.</li> </ul> <p><b>Role of EMB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direction with respect to Count timing was useful in that it allowed ROs to defend count timing in the event that politicians were unhappy with the proposal. However the EMB accepted that the key role of the Convener is to co-ordinate elections. This doesn't necessarily involve direction. Ideally coordination should be achieved via consensus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Bulletins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of EMB communications the example of the Scottish Government FAQs could inform future approaches.</li> <li>• The Bulletins issued by the EMB were useful, but given the number of different agencies involved, it is important to ensure that there is clear additionality and consistency in the messages.</li> <li>• A consistent centralised timetable for communications across the project would have been useful.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Future of the EMB</b></p> <p><b>Resources (officers, website, bulletin etc)</b></p> <p><b>Work Programme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACTION CH to meet with Electoral Commission and Scottish Government to develop proposals for the future of the EMB, especially concerning resourcing</li> </ul>	CH



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5	<p><b>Legislation</b></p> <p><b>Electoral Registration and Administration Bill – (House of Commons Briefing note circulated) Bill available here</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted</li> <li>• Note the implications for postal voting with the proposals for following up rejected AVIs</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Regional Returning Officers' Group and associated meetings</b></p> <p>(Papers available at <a href="http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups">http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups</a> )</p> <p><b>Elections and Referendums Steering Group Agenda and Papers – Update from Convener</b></p> <p><b>Elections &amp; Registrations Working Group Agenda and Papers – Update from Secretary</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noted. Neither the Convener nor the Secretary had attended recent meetings due to diary pressure and lack of relevance for Scottish elections.</li> <li>• For reference, papers are available at <a href="http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups">http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups</a> )</li> </ul>	<b>Noted</b>

