ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND ACTION NOTE: 27 January 2012 2:00pm City of Edinburgh Council HQ

Present:

- Board members: Mary Pitcaithly (MP Convener & RO), Brian Byrne (BB ERO, SAA rep), Douglas Gillespie (DG ERO), Joan Hewton (JH ERO) Bob Jack (RJ RO), Malcolm Burr, (MB RO),
- Advisers: David Freeland (DF Electoral Commission) Alex Thomson (AT Scottish Government Consultant) Roddy Angus (RA Scotland Office) Gordon Blair (GB DRO SOLAR rep) Andy Sinclair (AS Scottish Government)
- In attendance: Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board DRO) Ian McKay, Brian Smith (Royal Mail) David Anning (Logica)

	NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
Presentation: Roy Mail	 lan McKay / Brian Smith attended to outline Royal Mail's preparations for the election and to take questions Dates for dispatch of pollcards (by 2 April) & postal votes ((by 23 April) were identified It was clarified that sweeps need to deliver postals to RO by 10pm not later, even in the case of a next day count It was noted that Walksort was to be discontinued but that there would be a replacement product. Some price rises are expected around 2 April ACTION – ALL ROs / EROs to provide their print schedule to Royal Mail so that logistics and capacity can be planned appropriately; ROs / EROs also to provide estimates of volumes ACTION - ALL to consider whether poll cards would be released earlier to avoid price increases. 	CH to inform all ROs / EROs
Presentation from David Anning (Log	 David Anning – Logica eCounting Project Manager made a short presentation outlining key progress with respect to the eCounting project. 	

	NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
eCounting Contract Manager)	 Note that all postal ballots would now be delivered to Councils on 10 April. On 29 March close of nominations, candidate information will need to be uploaded to Logica by 12 midnight to fit in with printing schedule. All ballot papers will be produced at a single printer in Leeds. ROs or their representatives will be expected to visit the printer (required by RO performance standard) DA noted that there is a high level of contingency planning at the printer with redundant capacity etc The original aim had been for all papers to be delivered to ROs around 20 April, but Logica would be looking to deliver earlier if possible to reduce the risk of having all papers for Scotland on one site. Note that any papers of 12 candidates or more would need to be folded. Fold lines would be printed on the back of the paper – Presiding Officers would be trained in the handling of these papers. This would also have an impact on the capacity of ballot boxes Boxes would have an insert which will need to be constructed by polling staff to keep papers secure within the box and properly oriented. Recounts – it seemed that it would be possible for data to be extracted contest by contest which should reduce the delay at the end of the count but this process had not yet been tested. DA confirmed that it would be tested asap and was a critical element of planning. It was noted that adjudication rates would have impact on calls for a recount – high adjudication rates might undermine confidence in the system. ACTION it was agreed that ROs should be encourage to explain to observers clearly that integrity was the priority and that all would be done carefully and methodically to ensure that this was achieved. Speed would never be the priority, accuracy would. The tighter the count was managed the less reasonable would any request for a recount seem. Transparency and good communication with candidates and agents is essential. 	DA

		NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
		 All ROs were required to identify contingency arrangements for their counts. Scottish Government were to refresh their communication approach and ensure that there was clear and consistent flow of information to ROs about the project 	AS
1	Apologies	 Stuart Galloway (SG DRO) Sheila Scobie (SSc Scotland Office) Billy Pollock (WP DRO AEA rep) Steve Sadler (SS Scottish Government) Jon Harris (JH COSLA), David Anderson (DA RO) Andy O'Neill (AON Electoral Commission) 	Noted
2	Note of Previous Meeting (14 December 2011)	 Accepted as an accurate record. There were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda. 	Noted
3	Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 2012	Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 2012 Legislation / Supplementary legislation (update from Scottish Government) • As noted last month supplementary legislation had been finalised for these elections addressing some additional areas omitted from the Order. • Electoral Commission would update Guidance to reflect these changes EMB Work Programme Update Pre Election Period – Draft Guidance Material (circulated)	
		The guidance used in Edinburgh was to be circulated to all ROs as a template for their consideration. This was not a direction due to local practice and traditional approaches. However the guidance would express	СН

NOTE	ACTION / RESPONSIBLE
the key principles and illustrate them with scenarios.	
Direction on Count Timing (draft circulated)	
 A draft direction was considered in the light of the consultation material. The direction was to be redrafted for circulation to ROs to add clarity. ACTION CH to redraft and circulate to EMB for comment, then Convener for approval and circulation to all ROs and all who contributed to the consultation process. 	СН
Information in the Count Centre for Observers – update from Alex Thomson	
 AT noted that he would present proposals to the eCounting User group on the following Tuesday. There would be a suite of material proposed to ensure that candidates and agents understood the process and were familiar with what was happening at each stage and part of the count. 	
E Counting	
Issues were dealt with during the presentation from David Anning	
Printing Issues	
Dealt with during the presentation from David Anning. It was noted that print remains a major risk area for the whole election process.	
Risks involved in the production and delivery of ballot papers	
 Noted during presentation from David Anning. Mitigating actions include contingency arrangements for printing, redundant equipment and effort to 	

NOTE ACTION	N / RESPONSIBLE
deliver ballot papers early to ensure that they are distributed around the country and not all held in one place.	
Training	
 Logica project managers were liaising with Councils to arrange training sessions for all count staff and ROs. Noted 	
Ballot Boxes	
Ballot Box design was still being finalised.	
Adjudication – Doubtful Papers: Guidance from the Electoral Commission	
 Adjudication guidance and placemats were being finalised to be published by the Electoral Commission. Note that there would be clear guidance that a paper which was solely marked with a number other than 1 would be rejected, e.g. a 3 against the 3rd candidate etc. 	
 Note there was some discussion around the interpretation of the Elections Order which implies that while such a paper with the number "3" as a figure would be rejected a paper with the word "three" would be accepted. ACTION Electoral Commission to seek Counsel's opinion 	EC
The key issue is consistency. ACTION ALL ROs to ensure that the placemat is available at count centres and distributed to candidates and agents	ALL
Recounts – Paper from Scottish Government eCounting Project (circulated) • Noted	

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RO Performance Standards	
Note that all ROs had submitted the first return and those chosen to submit further information had done so. This was being reviewed by the Electoral Commission and would be shared with the Convener for follow up action where appropriate	
Joint Briefings / Spring Seminars • Noted	
Public Awareness	
 Planning was well advanced for a national campaign involving press, radio and TV, with a booklet also delivered to every household. Communications Network had been briefed such that local campaigns would align with the national effort. 	
Postal Voting / Royal Mail issues	
Major issues were covered during the presentation from the Royal Mail. In terms of timetabling it was noted that:	
 If poll cards can be distributed by 30/3 EROs could avoid the increased postal charges expected to come in on 2/4 ACTION EROs to consider potential for earlier dispatch 	ALL

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4	EMB Administration	 EMB Subgroups: Forms Group / Communication Network Forms were now available for download and were being widely used Communication network was well engaged in public awareness activities 	Noted
5	Bulletin / Newsletter	Future topics to be intimated to CH	СН
6	Regional Returning Officers' Group and associated meetings	 Noted. Neither the Convener nor the Secretary had attended recent meetings due to diary pressure and lack of relevance for Scottish elections. For reference, papers are available at http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/elections/elections-and-referendums-working-groups) 	Noted
8	Scottish Political Parties Panel	Meeting to be held on 31 January	NOTED
9	Consultations	 Electoral Commission paper on the timing of election counts, noted response to be prepared Scottish Government consultation on the proposed Referendum. Note the role that is given to the EMB. ACTION EMB response required. 	СН
10	Any Other Business	Electoral Commission Briefings for political parties & candidates on local government elections • EMB to provide representative to work with the Electoral Commission ACTION EC to liaise with Convener and CH Potential for Industrial Action • Note potential for Industrial action around the time of the election.	DF CH

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	ACTION future meeting to discuss risk management	ALL
	Official Mark (to be tabled)	
	 Proposed official mark tabled but felt to be potentially confusing. ACTION revised design to be sourced 	СН
	Joint Candidates	
	 Note that there had been some approaches by Green Party enquiring about the potential for allowing job share candidates. ACTION to be raised at PPP. 	СН
11 Dates of future	The following dates were agreed for the EMB meetings in 2012, starting at 2pm	
meetings	• 24 February 2012	
	• 30 March 2012	
	• 20 April 2012	
	• 25 May 2012	
	• 29 June 2012	
	• 31 August 2012	
	28 September 2012	NOTED
	• 19 October 2012	
	• 16 November 2012	
	• 14 December 2012	
	Data of the Lanceline 24 February 2002 2 to	
	Date of next meeting - 24 February 2012, 2pm	