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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND **ACTION NOTE: 2PM THURSDAY 28 MAY 2020**  ***HELD BY MS TEAMS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS*** | | | |
| Present:   * Board Members: Malcolm Burr (MB, Convener & RO), Pete Wildman (PW ERO), Kate Crawford (KC, ERO), Ian Milton (IM ERO), Roger Meenie (for David Martin), Jim Savege (JS RO), Steve Grimmond (SG RO) * Advisers: Dr Penny Curtis (PC Scottish Government), Maria McCann, (MMcC 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), Sarah Mackie (Electoral Commission), Liz Ure (LU Scottish Government), James Newman (JN, Scottish Government), Paul Docker (PD Cabinet Office) Roddy Angus (RA Scottish Government), Jack Lochan (Scottish Government) * In attendance: Chris Highcock (CH Secretary to the Board/DRO) | | | |
|  |  | **NOTE** | **ACTION** |
| **1.0/2.0** | **Note of Previous Meeting 26 March 2020 (circulated)**  **Apologies / Matters Arising** | * Noted and accepted as an accurate record * Apologies: Andrew Kerr (RO), David Martin (RO), Kenneth Lawrie (KL) | **Noted** |
| **3.0** | **Coronavirus – impact on planning and by-elections etc** | **An approach to local authority by-elections (circulated)**   * Recommendations of the paper noted. **ACTION** – all to review paper and raise and other points by 4 June 2020. Recommendation of the paper would then be implemented and issued to ROs/EROs by CH   **EMB Working Groups: Resilience Planning – Elections in the context of CoVid 19**  **Options for the delivery of Covid-secure elections Overview Report with appended reports covering: Nominations /Candidate Liaison; Registration; Polling; Postal Voting; The Count; Post Event Activity; and Public Awareness/Campaigning (to follow)**   * Overview report and reports of the seven Working Groups were considered. * It was noted that the Convener had written to the Cabinet Secretary highlighting that this work was underway and seeking a meeting to discuss the conclusions. * **ACTION** – Recommendations of the paper were accepted. All to review the papers and raise any further issues or comments to CH and MB by 4 June. Material would form basis of further submission to Ministers seeking action to address he issues identified in the reports.   **Support from Public Health Scotland**   * It was noted that contact had ben made with PHS via the Chief Executive, Angela Leitch a former RO member of the EMB. Initial discussions around potential support for ROs and EROs with respect to assessing working processes for electoral administration and registration in the light of potential CoVid restrictions. **ACTION** CH to maintain contact with PHS and Health Protection Scotland as likely situation becomes clearer. | **ALL**  **CH**  **ALL**  **CH MB**  **CH** |
| **4.0** | **Electoral Commission Update** | * Update report from Electoral Commission noted, covering Preparations for the 2021 Scottish Parliament Election, ERO Performance Standards, Review of the 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election, review of 2019 Electoral Fraud Data, Codes of Practice on Spending for Scottish Parliament Elections and accounting to Scottish Parliament   **ACTION**   * Note that EC is looking at how to deliver briefings (some in partnership with the EMB) for administrators, political parties and candidates, and Police Scotland in the event that physical distancing rules prevent us holding a face to face events; **ALL** * Any comments requested on Codes of Practice on spending for Scottish Parliament elections **ALL** |  |
| **5.0** | **Scottish Government Update** | **Legislation Update : Full commencement of Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act, Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill, Scottish Parliament Election Order 2020**  Update report previously circulated was noted covering   * **Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020** – Royal Assent on 1 April; provisions allowing prisoners serving sentences of 12 months or less to vote in devolved elections came into force on 2 April. The intention is for the Bill’s remaining provisions, to come into force on 3 August 2020. Scottish Government officials are working with the Electoral Commission, the EMB, EROs, the SPS and EMS providers on implementation. * **Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill** – Stage 3 debate of the Bill is now expected on 3 June. Government amendments were lodged in and there are no new substantive amendments. * **Scottish Parliament Conduct Order -** preparation of the conduct order for next May’s Scottish Parliament election underway. Aim to lay shortly after summer recess. Covid-19 situation has impacted wider programme of elections work and capacity which will affect how many and what changes can be made in the time available. DG propose to limit changes to those that are essential, can be implemented relatively easily and/or will bring the greatest benefit to voters. * **Referendums Act –** EMB hasappointed resource to draft Guidance but MMcC noted that due to CoVid situation there is no particular pressure for this work to be completed within the coming few months. | **ALL noted** |
| **6.0** | **UK Boundaries Review - Parliamentary Constituencies Bill** | **Correspondence from Minister of State Chloe Smith MP (letter and fact sheet circulated) -** Noted  The Parliament Constituencies Bill had its 1st reading in the House of Commons on 19 May. 2nd reading is expected on 2 June. The Bill would remove the requirement to implement the 2018 Review of UK Parliamentary constituencies, change the rules for review in order to retain 650 seats and require completion of the next review by July 2023.  Future reviews would be required every 8 years rather than every 5 as at present. As currently drafted the Bill would require use of the electorate at 1 December 2020 for the purposes of the review. |  |
| **7.0** | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | **Canvass Reform and effects of Covid on canvass**   * Offices all closed with staff working from home as Electoral Registration offices were operating under Covid-19 restrictions. Main focus of work on the new style Annual Canvass which includes the enfranchisement of foreign nationals. EROs were considering the practicalities of how the work would be progressed. * Follow up visits to properties unlikely - EROs likely to rely on telephone calls but note legal requirement for “door-knocks” * With respect to prisoner voting noted that one prisoner has registered – in Renfrewshire. This needs to be considered in all areas as by-election planning continues. * Note that Scottish Government working collaboratively with the UK and Welsh Governments to consider options to ease the burden of the upcoming canvass |  |
| **8.0** | **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland update** | * Written report from Boundaries Scotland noted * Note 18 March LGBCS submitted its recommendations to Scottish Ministers with respect to boundary between Glasgow Provan and Coatbridge and Chryston constituencies. * Reviews of local government electoral arrangements under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 - Recommendations for all 6 council areas will be submitted to Scottish Ministers in May 2021 in order that, if passed by the Scottish Parliament, changes would be in force for the local government elections expected in May 2022. |  |
| **9.0** | **General Preparation for Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021** | * Noted that the programme highlighted in previous reports to the Board was now superseded due to work to plan for operations under potential CoVid restrictions. Work was to focus on identifying training/support needs and then to offer support in the lead up to May 2021. |  |
| **10.0** | **Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 5 May 2022** | * eCount tender process discussed elsewhere in the meeting. |  |
| **11.0** | **eCount Procurement and implementation (report to follow)** | * Open tender process completed with four bids being received * The project team is currently reviewing bids, to identify a preferred supplier. * The review process will continue through to July 2020, and then progress to the point of contract creation and finally contract commencement which is currently planned to be September 2020. * The extension in timeline is due to two reasons: bidders required extra time to complete bids due to the current circumstance; and extra time has been allocated to the review process since receiving four bids. * Contingency planning measures reviewed to safeguard the project’s viability. |  |
| **12.0** | **EMB Financial Statement as at 31 March 2020 (circulated)** | * Noted |  |
| **13.0** | **EMB Annual Report – update** | * Drafting continues |  |
| **14.0** | **Local Council by-elections – upcoming polls (log of by-elections since May 2017)** | * Full record of rescheduled / scheduled by-elections noted on EMB website |  |
| **15.0** | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / ECAB and associated meetings** | * Noted that ECB and ECAB were continuing with increased activity around planning for elections under CoVid conditions. |  |
| **16.0** | **Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel (SPPPP) -29 April 2020 Update** | * Noted including letter to Scottish Conservatives (circulated) * CH updated SPPPP with respect to EMB planning for elections under the CoVid restrictions and Elections Reform Bill that would extend responsibility of EMB to include Scottish Parliament elections |  |
| **17.0** | **AEA Branch Update** | * Update noted, including AEA UK activity, qualifications and activities of Scottish and Northern Ireland branch. |  |
| **18.0** | **Any Other Business** | * None raised * Next meeting to be scheduled before end of June to allow discussion of issues associated with |  |

**Dates of Future Meetings**

Next meeting to be **30 June 2020 by Teams**

Subsequent meetings August and October to be finalised nearer the dates.