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| ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD FOR SCOTLAND **ACTION NOTE: 2PM 27 January 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 (16 December 2020)**  **Apologies / Matters Arising** | | * Noted and accepted as an accurate record; * 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** CH * Joyce White, RO for West Dunbartonshire was welcomed as an RO member of the EMB. * Apologies from: Jim Savege, (JS RO) | | **Noted**  **CH** | |
| **3.0** | | **Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021** | | **Scottish Parliament Election 6 May 2021 overall review of current position**  There continues to be much work underway across ROs, EROs, the Electoral Commission and Scottish Government. While there has been some media speculation of postponement the Scottish Government position is that there is no intention to postpone unless circumstances change significantly.  COSLA meeting on 29 January is expected to include discussion of the election with some politicians raising questions around safety and legitimacy. Discussion also expected at SOLACE. EMB had engaged with COSLA to comment on a paper drafted for the Leaders meeting.  **Update on the** [**Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill**](https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/Scottish-General-Election-Coronavirus-Bill)  Note that Royal Assent still awaited. MB and CH met with the Presiding Officer 19 January to discuss preparation for the election in general and issues around postponement given the terms of the Bill.  **Further Advice to Ministers on the need for multiple days of poll**  Draft was agreed. **ACTION** CH to submit to Minister.  **Additional Directions to ROs from the Convener of the EMB**  Wording of direction on count timing to be amended to make it clear that no box to be opened until after 9am on Friday 7 May. Otherwise agreed for issue to ROs **ACTION** CH to redraft and issue  **Police Scotland support for ROs and EROS – Supt Gerry Corrigan, National SPOC**  Update taken at this point of the agenda to allow Supt Corrigan to leave meeting for another engagement. SPOCs are all in place and a briefing session from EMB, Electoral Commission and COPFS scheduled for 12 February. Divisional SPOCS should all have been in touch with ROs. JW requested an updated list of SPOCs. **ACTION** CH to circulation to ROs and EROs  **Current Registration issues**  PW provided an oral update. All EROs have plans for increased capacity to cope with increased postal vote applications. Statistics of registration, postal vote applications and actual postal voters will be updated to EMB weekly. Currently percentage fairly stable (16.6% in December 16.7% in January) but little focussed campaign at this point. Volumes of applications certainly appear to be increasing.  HNLs will be issues week commencing 8 February. It is very much offering postals as an option, not something that must be adopted. Further plans for media activity.  KC briefed on the TV advert, commencing on STV during popular programmes from week commencing 1 February. Simple message – plan today to vote in May. 30 second advert with a campaign period of 16 days.  **ACTION** KC to circulate version of advert that can be used by ROs for social media activity.  PW noted that the ERC of the SAA meet monthly and are regularly monitoring and coordinating activity. Process for Emergency proxies still requires some attention to ensure approach is consistent across Scotland **ACTION** MMCC PW to discuss  A seminar for EROs has been planned arranged by Scottish Government with [Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure](https://www.cpni.gov.uk/national-security-threats) (CPNI) to review cyber security of registers.  **Joint January Event Briefing Event**  Agenda circulated for discussion. Will be an important evet for ROs and EROs to ensure clear understanding of risks and an opportunity to address wider issues. Polling will be made as safe as possible and an increase in postal voting should reduce potential queues and congestion. Attendance at Count and need for transparency will be major issue to address. It is clear that counts will take longer of necessity given fewer people. A safety briefing will be needed for all those attending count and this induction briefing will need to be mandatory.  It is clear that there is a diversity of opinion across ROs and DROs around severity of challenges being faced. While the Election can be delivered whether it should is a question for politicians. There will be much additional work involved in delivery and associated resources will be needed.  Seminar will be an important opportunity to raise all this issues but engagement will continue at SOLACE and in other forums with ROs.  **ACTION** CH AON MMCK to finalise planning for seminar and ensure all these issues are discussed at the event with opportunity to address all risks and concerns  **Updated Risk Register**  To be considered at February meeting.  **Fees and Charges Order**  Paper from Scottish Government circulated. Also circulated to ROs for comment. MMCC noted that this was very much a stating position and that the Scottish Government were in “listening mode”. It is recognise that there will be additional costs. As usual all justifiable costs will be recoverable. **ACTION** ALL comment to MMcC MB to discuss Fees with ROs. | | **CH**  **CH**  **CH**  **KC**  **PW**  CH AON MMCK  CH  ALL  MB | |
| **4.0** | | **Preparation for Scottish Local Government Elections 5 May 2022** | | **eCount for 2022 Scottish Local Government Elections**  Project Board report was circulated. Noted | |  | |
| **5.0** | | **Referendum Guidance** | | In final draft and will be considered further at the February meeting of the EMB **ACTION** CH to add to February agenda. | | **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.  Observations from Electoral Commission – [*key lessons learned from our observations of the Scottish Council by-elections held in the autumn of 2020 under coronavirus restrictions*](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/conducting-elections-under-coronavirus-restrictions)*.* Noted | |  | |
| **7.0** | | **Scottish Government Update** | | Paper previously circulated covering Scottish Parliament Election 2021 – Contingency Planning, Fees and Charges, Postal voting, eCounting 2022  Education Continuity Direction revised to come into force from 1 February allowing use of schools for elections. Also addresses provision of rooms to candidates. | |  | |
| **8.0** | | **Electoral Commission General Update** | | Oral Update from SM on Public Awareness. Note that letter will be going to all shielders mid February highlighting postal vote. Major media campaign will commence on 9 March focussing on public awareness. Welcome to your vote week at the end of February aimed at 16/17 year olds. | |  | |
| **9.0** | | **Electoral Registration Update from the Electoral Registration Committee of the SAA** | | Key issues covered above.  PW also noted PV refresh under way. | |  | |
| **10.0** | | **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland update** | | Written report circulated  LGBCS has completed its consultations in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney and Shetland council areas. Public consultation in Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire councils on Initial Proposals for those council areas closed on 26 January and the Commission will consider the responses shortly. Recommendations for all 6 council areas will be submitted to Scottish Ministers in May 2021 changes would be in force for the local government elections expected in May 2022.  The Parliament Constituencies Act received Royal Assent before Christmas and all 4 UK Commissions announced the formal start of the 2023 Review on 5 January when the electorate data was published. Under the terms of the legislation the electoral quota for the review is 73,393, with the electorate of each constituency (other than the five protected constituencies including 2 in Scotland) required to be within 5% of that, ie between 69,724 and 77,062 electors.  **Scotland will have 57 constituencies (2 fewer than at present)**; England = 543 (+10). Wales = 32 (-8); Northern Ireland = 18 (no change). Review recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Scotland in June 2023. | |  | |
| **11.0** | | **Regional Returning Officers’ Group / ECAB and associated meetings / SPPP** | | SP PPP met on 21 January. EMB presented proposed directions for consultation around count timing. No concerns raised by political parties represented. | |  | |
| **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 February 24 March 28 April** |