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Commission Board meeting of 18 March 2020   Coronavirus (COVID-19) - impact on the Commission and progress on key work areas   Updated timeline for the corporate planning

process 2021/26   Annual review of risk   Commission Board effectiveness review   Forward

plan of Board business   Commission Board action tracker   First published: 26 June 2020

Last updated: 21 June 2021   Meeting overview   Date: Wednesday 22 April 2020   Time:

9:30am to 12:25pm   Location: By video conference to Boothroyd Room, 3 Bunhill Row,

London   Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 20 May   Who was at the meeting   Who

was at the meeting   John Holmes, Chair   Alasdair Morgan   Anna Carragher   Elan Closs

Stephens   Joan Walley   Rob Vincent   Sarah Chambers   Stephen Gilbert   Sue Bruce   Bob Posner,

Chief Executive   Craig Westwood, Director, Communications, Policy and Research   Kieran

Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services   Louise Edwards, Director, Regulation

Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance   Amanda Kelly, Interim

General Counsel   David Bailey, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance   Katharine

Sparrow, Senior Executive Assistant   Isabella Coventry, Acting Board Secretary

Apologies and introductions   There were no apologies.   Declarations of interest   There

were no new declarations of interest.   Minutes of the Commission Board meeting of 18

March 2020   Resolved: That the minutes of the Commission Board meeting on 18 March

2020 be agreed.   Coronavirus (COVID-19) - impact on the Commission and progress on key

work areas (EC 33/20)   The Chief Executive noted the organisation's swift transition

to remote working had gone well overall, and he hoped it had also been beneficial for

our staff's health, as we did not have reports of widespread illness.   The Board heard

that the Speaker's Committee had approved our interim Corporate Plan and budget, and

work was now underway to consider how best to deliver what was in the plan in the

context of the coronavirus pandemic.   The Board discussed the impact of the current

situation on the ability for parties and campaigners to submit their returns by the

statutory deadlines and what this would mean for our transparency publications.   The

Director of Regulation said we were in communication with our stakeholders to

understand their specific situations and the impact this would have on compliance.

She noted a late return was not automatically an offence.   The Director of Electoral

Administration and Guidance updated the Board on the secondary legislation relating

to the postponement of the 2020 polls, and the work that the Cabinet Office were

leading to plan for the elections that would now take place in 2021.   The Board heard

that the government was due to take a decision on the canvas shortly.   The current

expectation was that the reformed canvas would proceed, though possibly with a

revised end date, and we continued to support Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)

and their teams in preparing for this.   The Board agreed that a discussion at a future

meeting around the May 2021 polls and the sequencing of elections after that would be

useful.   The Director of Communications, Policy and Research updated the Board on the

work his teams were doing to ensure our stakeholders continued to be informed, while

at the same time acknowledging that some currently had different priorities.   The

Director of Finance and Corporate Services said work was underway to prepare the end

of year accounts.   Overall, this was progressing smoothly, but he noted there would

likely be a couple of issues that would need discussion with the National Audit

Office (NAO) before the accounts could be settled.   He also updated the Board on the

financial position at the end of the financial year, noting we had ended the year

with a substantial underspend.   This related principally to the unscheduled UK

Parliamentary General Election (UKPGE) and the volatile electoral year, along with decisions we had taken around the core budget to manage what could have been a significant overspend. He noted that while we had a good narrative to explain the situation, we would also be challenging ourselves to see if there was anything we could have done differently to manage the situation. The Board discussed the possible impact the current situation around the coronavirus pandemic and the economic crisis this had created could have on the Commission's future budgets. Action: Add an agenda item on the timeline for the 2021 polls and the sequencing of elections after that date, to the forward plan of Board business. Resolved: That the paper be noted.

Updated timeline for the corporate planning process 2021/26 (EC 34/20) The Head of Strategic Planning and Performance updated the Board on the revised timeline for the production of the new Corporate Plan. The Board discussed the opportunities this could present to take account of the current situation and our ambitions for the longer-term modernisation agenda. The Chief Executive noted the occasions on the Board forward plan for these discussions. Resolved: That the paper be noted.

Annual review of risk (EC 35/20) The Head of Strategic Planning and Performance reminded the Board this report was a backward looking review of how risk had been managed through the last year. He noted that Risk 5 relating to Brexit had now been closed. The Chief Executive highlighted some of the actions taken though the year to improve the way the organisation managed risk. The Board discussed the importance of reflecting the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in our current risk registers. Resolved: That the paper be noted.

Commission Board effectiveness review (EC 36/20) The Chair noted that due to the current coronavirus situation, the independent led Board effectiveness review had been delayed, but plans were in place for them to observe at a future meeting and to consult with individual Board members. This delay meant we had not completed an effectiveness review in the last financial year, so this was the Board's opportunity to raise anything in advance of the more substantial review, which would get underway shortly. The Board discussed the Report. Issues noted for further consideration included The make-up and diversity of the Board How Board members might increase their engagement with a wider range of stakeholders How Board members could be engaged in the wider organisation between meetings Resolved: That the paper be noted, in advance of the full Board effectiveness review being carried out by the independent organisation engaged for those purposes.

Forward plan of Board business (EC 37/20) The Board considered whether a discussion around electoral divergence and the different approaches the devolved governments were taking to electoral modernisation might be useful. Action: Add a discussion around how we use our research to the May Board agenda, with a more substantive discussion at the September Board meeting Action: In the present context, Chief Executive's Update reports to include an update on risk Resolved: That the paper be noted.

Commission Board action tracker (EC 38/20) Resolved: That the paper be noted.