

been more effective than in previous elections. KC ran through the approach they had taken with those in care homes. FOD said one area in Glasgow had a disappointing level of postal votes. KC said most of the permanent postal vote applications had been fresh registrations. Electoral administration, nominations, candidate briefings CH said electronic copies of nominations submitted ahead of time had worked well for the main parties but independent candidates and smaller parties were less familiar with the process. SM questioned whether wet signatures were necessary, likewise the authorisation of each and every candidate and suggested providing just one list; there had been a lack of consistency with different versions of deposits and return forms; one council had helpfully posted pictures of what the polling station and count would look like. FOD said COVID restrictions had placed a strain on Royal Mail first class so they had opted for next day delivery guaranteed. She asked whether anyone ever checked full candidate name, and felt the name on the register should be enough. Some candidates had forgotten they had middle names and had to re-submit and had also experienced a lack of consistency in payment of deposits. Matt Edmonds (ME) had found nominations straightforward and had carried out checks beforehand. Descriptions for the Scottish Parliament had been handled a little differently and were a little bit of a headache with some councils. Paul Moat (PM) said pre-checking was a good idea but felt the process required modernisation and simplification. ROs had different interpretations of the rules which he would drop in an email afterwards. The candidate acceptance form had the witness narrative 'in my presence' so if witness signature date was after date of candidate it was queried, but there was no requirement for this. EC website forms were designed for printing and handwritten completion but not electronic so took time at the party end to get these things working. Virtual candidate briefings had meant being able to attend a few more than usual and perhaps a hybrid of physical and virtual in the future would be ideal. Postal voting Issues with suppliers in Dumfries and Galloway had been reported. FOD said issues in Renfrewshire had resulted in some postal ballots being hand delivered and sought reassurance lessons would be learned. If a postal ballot had not been received, could an email reminder be sent that they could produce it on the day? Airdrie and Shotts turnout for postal votes had been lower in the by-election as a significant number thought it was a re-issue for SP election and put in the bin. A by-election a week after a major election was too soon and caused a lot of confusion for voters. KC said the RRO Renfrewshire issue was being fully investigated. The reminder idea would be for ROs but said voters received a poll card if they changed from 'in person' to postal telling them to expect their ballot by a certain date and included a number to phone. SM noted that Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway Councils had also experienced printing issues. Polling day issues Parties reported that they had been keen to get postal vote files this time round but some EROs delayed issuing final PV files until they got cancellations in. Parties were keen to get them as soon as possible, even if not complete. KC said the first file run was done fairly quickly but in this election many had changed to postal so some EROs tried to provide data as accurate as possible and perhaps this caused delays. It would be discussed at the ERO wash-up meeting. Consistency of issue/timing across Scotland was desirable but tied to suppliers. Agreed dates for AV file issue would be useful for parties. Action point: EROs to agree dates and notify parties. SM said if AV files were issued monthly, parties would have no reason to write to potential voters who had changed their postal vote six months earlier. An emergency proxy should be issued if the postal ballot hadn't reached the elector; if they were unable to return in time or to students living hundreds of miles from their home address,

but had to be based on ERO being able to cancel the postal vote. A legislative change in closely defined circumstance would mean someone could get an emergency proxy. Ian Hockenhull (IH) said the Scottish Government was currently compiling a list of changes to the law so this could be considered. Parties reported that the issuing of COVID emergency proxies had been a little inconsistent. The 2014 Referendum on independence for Scotland's wider interpretation would have meant it was not required. Polling day issues – CH said they had circulated a note of turnout three times at each Edinburgh polling place to support polling agents but it had taken a lot of work from staff. There was to be a review amongst the ROs to go through issues so would be highlighted. There had been queuing in some polling stations with some joining after 10pm. Voting had taken a bit longer and weather had been poor, so people arrived in the last 2.5 hours. Verification and count CH said Candidates and agents were generally happy and able to sample boxes in the areas they wanted to. PM said expectation was low, so managed to see more than they thought they would; there was wide acceptance restrictions had to be in place but should go back to full scrutiny. ME agreed and said scrutiny was more than just sampling but understood it was done to the best of ability and, bar a few minor things, was well delivered. SM had a lot of comments about list candidates not allowed automatic entry but appreciated it was a one off and as long as there was a consistency in approach. He said not enough ROs re-distribute unused places which should be standard practice. Integrity issues MMcK said the Electoral Commission had participated in Police Scotland phone calls throughout polling day. Some allegations of personation would be investigated. Rachel de Palma Randle (RdPR) – reminded the panel of an Electoral Commission initiative which asked postmen to report any sightings of large numbers of postal votes to one address or someone putting a large number in a post box. SM had hoped for a consistent format of election results but was disappointed the Twitter hashtag had not been used by all Returning Officers. There was discussion about reporting the regional declarations by constituency and the Electoral Management Board becoming something of a result service. Action: MB welcomed the debate and said he would take the suggestion back to the next EMB meeting. Royal Mail Rachel Winham (RW) said the 'sweep' had gone very well and returned a large number of votes. RW advised parties they could contact the Royal Mail for daily reports on leaflet issue. She was aware that a lot of parties' postal voting plans got amended so when their printer brought something in later than marked, it wouldn't ring alarm bells. If dealing with printer, she said the best thing would be to drop a line to party, centrally. RW understood the importance of the first wave of candidate mail going out at the same time as the first postal vote and in general had been a much smoother process than in the past. PM said direct feedback to parties during the campaign was really useful as a lot of faith was placed in the printers. Campaigning issues and campaign material FOD noted that there had been an inconsistent application of Scottish Government's guidance in relation to what was acceptable campaigning in the run up to the polls. Communication could have been better. PM noted the new rules on digital imprints that were in place for the election. Parties and campaigners had sought to follow the rules in different ways. It was important to review the application and adherence to the rules. MMcK noted that the Commission would consider this as part of its post poll reporting. Action point: EC to discuss with parties out with this meeting. Campaign expenditure Paul Moat (PM) reported a lot of people getting in touch to download different forms. MMcK noted an inconsistency around recording notional spending in the long and short campaign forms which had been addressed. Commission guidance MMcK requested suggestions for improvements to

the Commission's guidance. MB welcomed similar feedback for the EMB. SM said there had been inconsistency over commonly used names which was correct in the previous version but the nature of election rules in UK England/Wales was complicated and sometimes cropped up in the Scottish version. Parties used to be given draft guidance but that had been perceived as an advantage. New guidance for LG elections would be in new format. SM said he would like to receive notification when any guidance was changed. Public awareness There were no comments. Scottish Government update MMcC said the Immediate focus was on Local Government elections; working on the conduct order and a proposal to bring forward changes mirroring those in the Scottish Parliament Conduct Order. The Scotland Office update had mentioned legislation the UK Government was taking through; Scottish and Welsh ministers had written indicating their concern that the Prime Minister had complete discretion to call an election which would require a Scottish or Welsh election to be moved. A dialogue on what might be done was under way. MMcC will share what the LG reports would look like and extended an invitation to the parties to attend a local government count demonstration. Action: MMcC send Draft Local Government Conduct Order, set of sample reports and invitation to parties. Scotland Office/Cabinet Office update Hannah Standing (HS) said the recently called Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill currently had no date for its second reading but there were some concerns regarding timings and potential clashes between UK and devolved parliaments. It was early days for the Electoral Integrity Bill but she hoped to have a more substantive proposal at a future meeting. Cabinet Office officials would shortly share information with members of this group; an update on proposals for notional expenditure and an overview of new proposals intended to update the political finance framework, within the next few weeks. Action: Cabinet Office to share proposals for notional expenditure and overview of new proposals for political finance framework. Boundaries Scotland update IDM noted the new name for Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland and that the 6 islands review were nearing completion. In response to a question IDM confirmed that she expected the next review of Scottish Parliament constituencies to begin in late 2022/early 2023 in order to meet the legislative deadline of May 2025. Boundary Commission for Scotland update IDM said she would set up an online meeting with parties around 28/29 June. This would go over the approach to the review, the new legislation, timing and son on. The Boundary Commission for England would be commencing their consultation on 8 June but the other 3 commissions , including BCS, would follow in the autumn. Action: IDM to set up meeting with parties around 28/29 June. Royal Mail update All covered previously. EMB update Nothing else to add. Electoral Commission update Sue Bruce (SB) said John Pullinger, the new Chair would be in post shortly and that the feedback from this meeting had been helpful and would inform our post event reporting. Dates of future meetings 2021 15 September 10 November 2022 20 January *8 March 6 May. Pre-meeting 10:30 and meeting proper at 11:00 am except for *8 March which will be 2:30 pre-meeting and 3:00pm meeting Related content Party registration decisions View our decisions on political party names, descriptions and emblems View current applications View the political party names, descriptions and emblems which we are currently considering as part of our assessment process Donations and loans Find out about donations and loans to a political party, individual or other organisation Registers of unincorporated associations Download and view the registers of unincorporated associations