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report Overview This section provides an overview of the Electoral Commission, our  
purpose, our performance during the last year and the key risks to achieving our  
goals. We have included summary financial information within the performance report.  
This is consistent with the financial statements, where more detail is available. The  
Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) established the  
Electoral Commission. We are independent of governments and political parties and  
directly accountable to the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments. We have prepared our  
2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts in accordance with an accounts direction, set out  
on page 166, issued by HM Treasury under paragraph 17 (2) of Schedule 1 PPERA. We  
have prepared the powers and sanctions report on page 51 in accordance with paragraph  
15 Schedule 19(b) and paragraph 27 Schedule 19(c) PPERA. Preface Foreword It has been  
a very busy year for the Electoral Commission in its work to support stakeholders in  
every part of the UK. I would like to thank all the staff of the Commission for their  
dedication, professionalism and expertise in providing independent and impartial  
advice and guidance to voters, administrators, and the regulated community. A  
particular focus this year has been preparing for the implementation of the UK  
Elections Act alongside the distinct electoral agendas in Northern Ireland, Scotland  
and Wales. The Commission works flexibly as one cohesive unit across these  
geographies, challenges and opportunities. We are committed to putting the voter  
first. We know that public awareness of the electoral system is hugely important to  
voter engagement and confidence. We have invested in ensuring people can understand  
what the changes mean for them and how to take part in elections. More widely, we  
have made efforts to support newly enfranchised and young voters to get involved in  
the democratic process. This work is coupled with support for electoral  
administrators, responsible for delivering the changes on the ground. Our guidance is  
designed to help them fulfil their responsibilities, against the challenging backdrop  
of resource constraints and legal complexity. Their work and dedication have been  
paramount to ensuring the changes were implemented well. Those in England and  
Northern Ireland with elections in May 2023 have been particularly busy, but  
administrators in Scotland and Wales have also been preparing for new measures at  
future polls. There have also been changes for campaigners to get to grips with. We  
continue to invest in the regulatory support and advice on offer to help parties and  
campaigners understand and meet their legal obligations and achieve compliance. I am  
pleased with the level of take up from the parties and the quality of engagement  
we've had with them. I have enjoyed the opportunity to meet a broad spectrum of our  
stakeholders and those involved in democratic and political systems across the UK.  
During the year, the Commission Board travelled to Belfast and Chorley for engaging  
meetings with local organisations, youth groups, candidates, councillors and  
administrators. Other similar visits are planned in the coming year to support us in

hearing direct from stakeholders. We were delighted to be joined by Mr Speaker in his home constituency to discuss our constructive engagement with the Speaker's Committee, through which we are accountable to UK Parliament. Hearing a range of voices and views is so important to understanding how the Commission can continue to improve and be ready for future demands. It goes hand in hand with ongoing research into modernising elections which, together, will be used to support recommendations to the UK's governments about how the electoral system can continue to support participation in the democratic process. In October, the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee of the UK Parliament published its report on our work. We welcomed its findings on the urgent need for consolidation, updating and improvement of electoral law. The report also made recommendations to ensure the Commission remains capable of responding to the challenges the electoral system faces, and recognised that operational independence is a fundamental aspect. In responding to the UK Government's consultation on its proposed Strategy and Policy Statement for the Electoral Commission, we shared our view that such a statement – by which the government can guide our work – is inconsistent with our role. Both the Speaker's Committee and Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee highlighted the importance of maintaining the Commission's independence and the risks posed by such a statement. We await the next stage in this process, but the Board remains firmly committed to independent decision-making, acting according to the needs and interests of the whole electoral community, including voters. Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that this year we have been responding to a cyber-attack by a hostile actor. This has been a major challenge and important learnings have been taken forward. I apologise to all those, including staff of the Commission, whose personal data has been put at risk. The Commission puts independence and impartiality at the heart of all it does, and that focus will continue in all our work in the year ahead. John Pullinger CB, Chair

A message from our Chief Executive The Commission has, rightly, set itself ambitious objectives in its Corporate Plan, and work to deliver on those goals has been happening at pace. Our teams in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have worked tirelessly to provide high-quality and efficient services to all those we support. A great deal of effort and expertise has been dedicated to ensuring that the May 2023 elections could be delivered in a way that maintained voter confidence. This was a particular challenge this year, with new changes brought in by the Elections Act layered onto an already complex system. The Commission's awareness campaign about the new requirement to show voter ID was the most publicly visible illustration of the work that went into ensuring everyone could take part; this was a truly integrated campaign combining paid advertising and partnership engagement, with press, social media and voter information activity. But voter ID is not the only change from the Elections Act. Throughout the year, the Commission also held consultations on a Code of Practice for non-party campaigners, the introduction of digital imprints, and new accessibility measures at polling stations. Engagement with parties, campaigners, electoral administrators and partners allowed us to improve the usefulness of our guidance and enhance our evidence base about how the law is applied in practice. We continue to invest and focus on how we can best support our regulated community to understand the law and achieve compliance. The laws around political finance play a big part in providing transparency and maintaining voter confidence in the fairness of the system. Our database now provides information on over £1bn of donations reported by parties and campaigners since the Commission was established in 2000. This is a noteworthy milestone and one that demonstrates the level of information that we make available

for everyone to see. We will continue to highlight areas where the UK's political finance system could be reformed to increase confidence in the system. We are also committed to supporting and championing the voice of young and future voters. In January, over 220 schools across the UK signed up to take part in Welcome to Your Vote Week. This is a focal point of our learning work, which aims to promote greater consistency in political literacy education, and increase political knowledge and understanding amongst young people. This is an important and growing area of our work, and it's been great to see it go from strength to strength. Within the Commission we also continue to make positive changes. In response to a cyber-attack on the organisation, considerable improvements have been made to the organisation's digital infrastructure, which recognises the potential risks from cyber-attacks, and helps to protect our systems from such incidents in the future. Work continues on replacing the current online system for registering political parties and reporting financial information, and we regret that the project was not completed in this financial year as hoped. We have developed a new People Strategy for 2022-25, which sets out planned improvements to improve HR systems, learning and development, recruitment, and performance management. A new development programme was also launched this year, which aims to strengthen the personal leadership skills of our people and to improve and strengthen the Commission's overall culture. It has been rewarding to see these positive changes over the last year. The executive team and I remain committed to ensuring the Commission is in the best possible position to maximise our performance and support our people and stakeholders. Shaun McNally CBE, Chief Executive

**Our role** We work to promote public confidence in the electoral system and ensure its integrity. Our strategic objectives

- Accessible registration and voting
- Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance
- Resilient local electoral services
- Fair and effective electoral law
- A modern and sustainable electoral system

**Our vision** is to ensure people trust, value, and take part in elections and referendums. We aim to achieve this vision by delivering the strategic objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27, which we laid in the UK Parliament and Scottish Parliament in April 2022, at the same time as the related Corporate Plan for Wales was sent to the Senedd. These strategic objectives are the basis on which we evaluate the Commission's performance for the year.

**Enabling factors** To ensure we are equipped as an organisation to meet these objectives, we have identified three key enabling activities. We demonstrate independence and integrity

We continue to demonstrate our independence and integrity by taking decisions on the evidence and being transparent about the reasons for them; basing our policy positions and recommendations on analysis of evidence; effectively communicating our work and views; providing responsive services to those we support; and maintaining effective governance arrangements. We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued

We implement refreshed working practices to reflect wider changes in our work environment and culture; attract, retain and develop the people we need; maintain and improve high standards of management, with a focus on developing our people; and further embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work. We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively

We procure and implement value for money technology that improves service delivery as appropriate; maintain a sound prudent financial strategy; continue to develop techniques to learn from experience, seek continuous improvement and become more efficient and effective; develop a corporate environmental strategy that meets policy and legislative requirements. Our role across the UK

We deliver for voters across all parts of the UK, with Electoral

Commission offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London. We work closely with the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments. We are accountable to the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd, and are funded by each of these for the work undertaken on elections under their devolved or reserved powers. Electoral law is not devolved in Northern Ireland and remains reserved to Westminster. UK-wide organisation The Commission is a UK-wide organisation, and the Board takes decisions with that approach in mind. Due to legislation, this Annual Report must only focus on the work done in relation to our role and accountabilities to the UK Parliament. Separate information is available for Scotland and Wales and our accountabilities to those parliaments. Our year at a glance

Quarter one The UK government's Elections Act received Royal Assent We published our report on the 2021 canvass and electoral registers in Great Britain Shaun McNally was appointed Chief Executive The May 2022 elections were delivered We launched our consultation on new Returning Officer performance standards

Quarter two We published parties' annual statements of accounts The Commission held a Board meeting in Belfast The UK government launched its consultation on a Strategy and Policy statement for the Commission We published our reports on the May 2022 elections in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland We launched our consultation on updated accessibility guidance for Returning Officers

Quarter three We published new guidance for Electoral Registration Officers on managing the process for free voter ID the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee reported on the work of the electoral Commission We gave evidence to the Levelling Up Housing and Communities Select Committee on the draft Strategy and Policy Statement We published campaign spending from the Northern Ireland Assembly election We launched our consultation on the draft Code of Practice for non-party campaigners

Quarter four We launched our voter ID public awareness campaign for the May 2023 elections We published our consultation on the revised Enforcement Policy We ran Welcome to Your Vote week with educational bodies and youth groups We published updated guidance for Returning Officers ahead of May elections, including on new accessibility requirements We launched our voter registration public awareness campaign for the May 2023 elections

Our year in numbers 280,498 voter registration (2021-22: 660,000) 100% of election reports published in a timely manner (2021-22: 100%) 66% employee engagement score achieved (2021-22: 67%) 11,829 public enquiry responses (2021-22: 24,643) 14,800 social media responses (2021-22: 1,259) 387 donation reports from parties published (2021-22: 412) 82% of party registrations processed within target time (2021-22: 93%) 91% of investigations closed within target time (2021-22: 68%) 797 annual statements of accounts published (2021-22: 724) 100% of electoral administration guidance published on time (2021-22: 100%) 99% of advice requests from local authorities met within 3 days (2021-22: 99%) £16,000 civil sanctions issues as a regulator (2021-22: £58,000) Performance Analysis

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Objective: Accessible registration and voting Objective: Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance Objective: Resilient local electoral services Objective: Fair and effective electoral law Objective: A modern and sustainable electoral system

Enabling factors: Independence and integrity Enabling factors: Skilled organisation where diversity is valued Enabling factors: Improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively

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