

Board minutes: 19 May 2021 | Electoral Commission Search

Board minutes: 19 May 2021 You are in the Electoral Commission Board section
Home How we make decisions Electoral Commission Board On this page Who was at the meeting Apologies and introductions Declarations of interest Minutes of the previous Board Meeting May 2021 elections reporting Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27: strategic direction Performance report quarter four 2020/21 Review of the annual report and accounts 2020/21 Update from Committee Chairs Commission Board action tracker Forward plan of Board business First published: 14 October 2021 Last updated: 4 February 2022 Meeting summary Date: Wednesday 19 May 2021 Time: 9.30am to 1pm Location: By video conference Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 23 June 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting John Pullinger, Chair Sue Bruce Rob Vincent Alex Attwood Sarah Chambers Elan Closs Stephens Stephen Gilbert Alasdair Morgan Joan Walley In attendance: Bob Posner, Chief Executive Craig Westwood, Director, Communications, Policy and Research Louise Edwards, Director, Regulation Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance Kieran Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services Binnie Goh, General Counsel Zena Khan, Senior Advisor, Governance Hannah Kavanagh, Legal Officer (all items) Rhydian Thomas, Head of Electoral Commission, Wales (item 4) Andy O'Neill, Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland (item 4) Phil Thompson, Head of Research and Evaluation (item 4 and briefing session) Tom Hawthorn, Head of Policy (item 4 and briefing session) David Bailey, Head of Strategic Performance and Planning (items 4 and 5) Tim Crowley, Head of Digital Communications and Learning (item 5) Niki Nixon, Head of External Communications (item 5) Tracey Blackman, Head of Finance and (item 7) Mark Williams, Policy Manager (briefing session) Apologies and introductions No apologies were received. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting advising the Board on activities undertaken whilst in post so far and thanked staff for the inductions and briefings he had received. Declarations of interest There were no new declarations of interest. Minutes of the previous Board Meeting (EC 35/21) Resolved: That the minutes of the Commission Board meeting on 21 April 2021 be approved with minor amends to item 11. May 2021 elections reporting (Oral) The Board received a presentation to consider the initial perspectives on how the elections were delivered in relation to the objectives for well-run elections during the Covid-19 pandemic. These conclusions would be tested against the evidence base the Commission is currently developing, with an update on the emerging conclusions and a discussion on any recommendations to be included in our reporting scheduled for the July Board meeting. The Board also received feedback from Head of Electoral Commission, Wales and Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland on the planning process, campaigning, voters and administration in those areas. The Board noted updates from Commissioner for Wales and Commissioner for Scotland, reporting overall satisfaction and well organised polling stations. The Board noted the presentation and looked forward to receiving a report on the emerging evidence base and recommendations at the July Board. Resolved: That the Board noted the presentation and welcomed planned discussions to explore solutions to address challenges of supplier capacity in the electoral administration, as well as learning from experience to promote best practice to drive standards upwards. Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27: strategic direction ((EC 36/21) The Board received a report providing the Board with an opportunity to review the proposed strategic direction for the Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27. It was noted that the general strategic direction for the plan was endorsed by the Board in October 2020, but with the passage of time and events it was opportune to ensure it remained appropriate. The Board asked questions and made suggestions on the drafting of the Plan. They

encouraged greater consideration of what the electoral system might look like in the future and the Commission's role in bringing that about. The Board asked that the Commission's work in public education and research be considered broadly. Working in closer partnership with stakeholders and reaching out to under-represented groups was encouraged. There was consideration of future trends in addressing climate change objectives and the rise in carbon neutral election tools. The Board discussed ensuring the Corporate Plan was accessible and recognised the different situation in each of the nations of the UK. Resolved: That the strategic direction for the development of the Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27 take into account how the electoral system needs to adapt to future challenges.

Performance report quarter four 2020/21 (EC 37/21) The Board received a report providing performance information for the quarter to end of March, as well as information for the year end. For quarter four, all the goals were rated green overall but, as indicated within the goals and other sections of the report, some indicators, operational plan actions, projects and risks beneath these were not green. That Board noted that, in several indicators in Goals 2 and 4, the indicator was red in part due to the target being set at 100% where this could not reasonably be expected. The relevant Directors reported that review of the performance indicators for 2021/22 had identified this and more feasible, but still stretching, targets were being set. The Board asked for more narrative information to bring out why deadlines had been missed and the importance of meeting Audit and Risk Committee deadlines. Resolved: The Board noted performance for the fourth quarter and for the year as a whole (subject to finalisation as part of the annual report and accounts).

Review of the annual report and accounts 2020/21 (EC 38/21) The Board received a draft of the Commission's Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21 following inputs provided at the April Board meeting on the performance review and key messages. The Board noted that the current draft had received further input from the Chair, Executive Team, Heads and other relevant staff. The Board discussed and provided input on scope and presentation along with getting the detail and balance right. The Board noted that feedback would be incorporated to finalise the content and then brought back to the June Board following a review at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting also scheduled in June. Resolved: That the final report be brought back to the June Board meeting.

Update from Committee Chairs Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chair of Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) of the meeting held on 30 March 2021. The Board noted strategic and policy decision updates on activity following receipt of the bullying and harassment report and, progress with actions arising from the pay benchmarking exercise. The Board also noted information and standing item updates on progress with the people strategy report, post Covid-19 ways of working, Race at Work Charter Taskforce and other Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity, as well as exit payment updates and the Committee's annual report to the Commission Board and effectiveness review. Resolved: That the Board noted the updates on operations and matters arising.

Audit and Risk Committee (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee of the meeting held on 18 May 2021. The Board noted strategic and policy decision updates from the National Audit Office, internal audit reports on Covid-19 lessons learnt, quality assurance and procurement, an annual review of the anti-bribery, anti-fraud and whistleblowing policies. The Board also noted information and standing items on audit recommendations, annual reviews of information risk management, accounting policies and committee terms of reference. The Board noted that should Board members wish to attend a future Audit and Risk Committee meeting as observers, to contact the Audit

and Risk Chair or Board Secretary. Resolved: That the Board noted the updates. Commission Board action tracker (EC 39/21) The Board received the Commission Board action tracker noting deadlines and ownership to be included. Resolved: That the Commission Board action tracker be noted. Forward plan of Board business (EC 40/21) Commissioners discussed items of business for future meetings. These would be reflected in the Forward plan of Board business at the June meeting. Resolved: That the Forward plan of Board business be noted. At this point the Board concluded their business and this was followed by an informal briefing session on: UK Government Electoral Integrity Bill The Board received a presentation on the provisions expected to be contained in the Electoral Integrity Bill, led by Director, Communications, Policy and Research. The Board discussed a number of the provisions covered in the presentation, to support the Commission's preparatory work for the Bill's introduction and providing advice to parliamentarians.