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You are in the Party panels section Home How we make decisions Party panels First published: 14 July 2020 Last updated: 14 July 2020 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM) Chair of the meeting Andrew Steadman (AS) Megan Tucker (MT) Liberal Democrats: Darren Briddock (DB) Labour: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications & Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM) Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 04/12/2018) The minutes were agreed. AM asked for an update on the Commission's review of the registers of political parties. LE advised that the Commission has reviewed party descriptions on the Northern Ireland register; the review for Great Britain would now take place after the May polls. AM asked for clarification on the deadline for new parties registering ahead of May local elections. LE stated the deadline was 4 February to guarantee a decision before the May polls. Codes of Practice on election spending by candidates and political parties AS highlighted the practical difficulties in terms of timing that would exist if implemented in April, as May is a particularly busy time with local elections. LE outlined the current timetable the Commission is working to and noted timing concerns. AS reiterated a proposal for a joint meeting take place with the Commission and all parties to 'test' the draft codes. DB noted that there are some common themes to feedback so would be a useful exercise. CW and LE agreed a meeting would be scheduled. Preparations for May 2019 local elections in England and Northern Ireland CW gave an outline of the Commission's public awareness work ahead of the May local elections. AS asked if the Commission micro targets specific groups; CW explained that the Commission doesn't micro target audiences on multiple data points, but does undertake broader targeting to reach under registered groups and specific demographics, for example overseas voters and students. AM asked if the Commission had been consulted on the change of wording on the nomination forms for standing as a candidate, from 'witness' to 'attest' a candidate recording his or her home address. DB stressed the need for parties to advise people about the change. CW agreed to consult with colleagues and update accordingly. Potential recall petition in Peterborough AS had proposed the agenda item and mentioned the recommendations in Commission's report following the first recall petition in North Antrim. He said that it has been noted there is a tight timetable to deliver any recall petition. CW explained the Commission has been advising Peterborough Council accordingly, to support its contingency planning. The Commission's Enforcement policy AS stated his concerns with the tone of the language being used by the Commission in some regulatory correspondence. DB and AW expressed similar views. DB noted that volunteer treasurers were resigning due to accusatory language being used in correspondence. AM explained many volunteer inherit unfavourable situations and the current tone of communication is unhelpful. AS stressed that the Commission's current approach makes it more likely volunteers won't tell the parties of their mistakes which ultimately impacts on transparency. LE stated her commitment to looking into the tone of letters being issued, in line with feedback from the parties. AW explained his concerns regarding the Commission's current enforcement approach. He highlighted his view that despite having a range of options available, there has been a shift in Enforcement Policy, and large fines are being issued. LE referred to the Commission's Enforcement policy that was revised, following consultation, and been effective from April 2016. LE noted that decisions to impose fines, and the size of that fine, are determined in

line with the Policy and on the facts of each case. AM asked in light of public interest, and volunteers trying to help not hinder the democratic process, if the Commission would review its Enforcement Policy. LE explained the Commission is due to consult this year on the policy and will be interested in feedback from the parties. GDPR text for electoral registration forms AS flagged the issue of GDPR wording on forms and stated his support for informing voters clearly on the form 'your data will be given to political parties'. He highlighted many voters are unaware that even with GDPR rules, it doesn't apply to political parties. CW agreed it is important for voters to know who has access to their data and explained the Commission's canvass reform project will undertake a review of the full suite of form, including the wording relating to GDPR on forms. DB noted a particular issue with nomination forms, where signatories may not realise that their names will be made public. AM suggested as part of that work, the Commission look at the self-nominating election forms used in Scotland. Commission Update Report AM noted that at previous PPP meetings, members had had the opportunity to engage with Commissioners. LE and CW agreed to explore the possibility of involving Commissioners at a future meeting. MT asked for information on the delivering modern guidance project and what would be available to see at user group meeting scheduled for 27 March. CW agreed to update the PPP after the meeting. AS noted that minutes from meetings are now only available for the previous year on the Commission's website. LM agreed to share with him older copies of minutes. DB emphasised the need for the Commission to assist parties and ensure new PFR Online portal starts at the beginning of their financial year (calendar year). AM explained the parties were at the very early stages of thinking about potential legislation to change regulated periods. LE stated the Commission would be keen to have a discussion with the PPP on their thinking Any other business LE explained the Commission would shortly consult with parties on a prosecutions policy being part of the Enforcement Policy. Action Status LM to arrange a meeting with the PPP to discuss draft Codes of Practice. Completed Investigate if the Commission was consulted on the change of wording on home address forms. Update to be provided at 4 June meeting LE and CW agreed to explore the possibility of involving Commissioners at a future meeting. Update to be provided at 4 June meeting LM share a copy of previous minutes with AS Completed