

Board minutes: 17 February 2023 | Electoral Commission Search

Board minutes: 17 February 2023 You are in the Electoral Commission Board section Home How we make decisions Electoral Commission Board On this page Who was at the meeting Welcomes and introduction to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP Apologies Declarations of interests Minutes Commission Board action tracker Chief Executive's update Forward Plan of Board business 2022/23 and 2023/24 Strategy and Policy Statement (SPS) Key messages for the annual report Annual review of risk First published: 19 April 2023 Last updated: 20 April 2023 Commission Board minutes 17 February 2023 Friday 17 February 2023 Location: In person Date of next scheduled Board meeting: Wednesday, 22 March 2023 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting John Pullinger Chair Rob Vincent Alex Attwood Sarah Chambers Stephen Gilbert Roseanna Cunningham Chris Ruane Katy Radford Elan Closs Stephens In attendance: Shaun McNally Chief Executive Kieran Rix Director, Finance and Corporate Services Craig Westwood Director, Communications, Policy and Research Ailsa Irvine Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance Louise Edwards Director, Regulation Binnie Goh General Counsel Sal Naseem Independent Adviser to the Commission Board on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Matt Pledger Senior Adviser, Governance Zena Khan Senior Adviser, Governance Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP Mr Speaker, House of Commons [item 2] Councillor Peter Wilson Deputy Executive Leader Chorley Council [item 2] Orla Hennessy Media Relations & Public Information Manager [item 11] Welcomes and introduction to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP The Chair of the Board welcomed Mr Speaker to the meeting. Mr Speaker reciprocated in welcoming the Board to Chorley and stated that the work of the Commission was much appreciated. Mr Speaker outlined key aspects of the electoral reform agenda across the UK and areas where he was undertaking engagement, including internationally. He highlighted the UK Youth Parliament and the need to support wider youth engagement in democracy. Mr Speaker noted the importance of his committee's relationship with the Commission, and a desire to engage on a broader range of subjects than on financial and performance issues. The Board welcomed engagement with the Speakers Committee. Apologies The Board received apologies from Commissioner Sue Bruce. Declarations of interests The Board noted the following updated entries of declarations of interests since the January 2023 Board meeting: Commissioner Alex Attwood: Member of the Electoral Commission for Ireland ("An Coimisiún Toghchain") Commissioner John Pullinger: Chair: High Level Steering Group, Better Lives 2030 Conference Zambia, April 2023 Commissioner Stephen Gilbert: Member of the Industry and Regulation Select Committee of the House of Lords Independent Adviser to the Commission Board on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Sal Naseem: Member of Spectrum Speakers General Counsel Binnie Goh: Trustee of Vibrance, a Social Care charity Minutes (EC 176/23) Resolved: That the Board agreed the minutes of the Board meeting 17 January 2023, subject to minor amendments. Matters arising: The Board noted that the Commission had yet to receive a response to its letter, sent to the Security Minister, regarding foreign donations to political parties. Commission Board action tracker (EC 177/23) The Board noted that the Chief Executive would be chairing the Equality Diversity and Inclusion, (EDI), Project Group and the first meeting was scheduled for March 2023. The Group would initially meet every six weeks. The scope of the Project Group would be determined at the first meeting and will align to the People Strategy. The Board noted the actions from the Belfast Board event, and that the high level summary notes of the actions were to be circulated to Board members and attendees. Resolved: That the Board noted the progress against actions requested by the Board which included the action tracker of the Belfast Board event. Chief

Executive's update (EC 178/23) The Chief Executive reported to the Board that a budget underspend was forecast. To improve forecasting, the Board noted that mandatory training was being implemented for all budget holders, and work to improve recruitment rates was underway. The Board noted that for financial year 2024/25 estimates would be formulated on a zero-based review. The Board noted that there was a historic trend in the Commission for budget underspends and welcomed the actions being taken by the Chief Executive to improve financial management. The Chief Executive reported that procurement was underway to replace the current board support platform. Commissioners were invited to advise the Director, Regulation if they wished to engage and test the shortlisted software. The Board noted work being undertaken on implementation of the Elections Act, staff sickness absence, voter accessibility and performance standards. The Director, Communications, Policy and Research updated the Board on progress with the campaign, including the advertising used and the partnership activity with civic society organisations and local authorities. The Director, Communications, Policy and Research also noted discussions with UK Government about the campaign. Members of the Board suggested that updates on other Elections Act 2022 provisions, specifically postal and proxy vote changes, and overseas voting, feature at a future meeting. Resolved: That the Board noted the Chief Executive's update on operations and matters arising and, the quarterly performance report for quarter three. Forward Plan of Board business 2022/23 and 2023/24 (EC 179/23) The Board noted that some of the dates for the Audit and Risk Committee 2023/24 would be revised. Resolved: That the Board noted the Forward Plan of Board business 2022/23 and 2023/24 Strategy and Policy Statement (SPS) (EC 180/23) The Director, Communications, Policy and Research introduced the report, stating that the Commission's ongoing concerns about the SPS will continue to be voiced. This would be undertaken in parallel with planning proportionate preparations for accountability under the SPS. The Board noted that the UK Government had delayed its expected timetable for moving to the next stage of engagement on the SPS, and no timescale had been confirmed. The Board welcomed the report and agreed the direction proposed in the report to enable work to progress. Resolved: That the Board noted an update on preparing for Commission accountability under the SPS. Key messages for the annual report (EC 181/23) The Director, Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report and requested the Board consider the suggestions outlined. The Board noted that the timing for release of the final report would be post May 2023 elections. The Board overall was satisfied with the key messages that were conveyed in the paper and provided the following additional guidance. Resolved: That the Board would like to ensure that the Annual Report is clear on the outputs of the Commission's activities. Resolved: That the Board would like to see strong forward focused messages from both the Chair and Chief Executive in the Annual Report. Resolved: That the Board would like the Annual Report to demonstrate that the Commission has a robust focus on EDI which incorporates all activities. Resolved: That the Board agreed that the Annual Report should reference the work done on implementation of the Elections Act, including management and mitigation of risk. Resolved: That the Board requested that the Annual Report should draw out the Commission's activities across all nations of the UK. Annual review of risk (EC 182/23) The Director, Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report to the Board and requested guidance as to whether the risks were acceptable to the Board. The Board noted that the analysis had been simplified to enable a range of audiences to engage and that the review of risk was ongoing. The Board noted that the report was subject to consultation with the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, (ARC), and the Independent Adviser to the ARC. Resolved:

That the Board agreed the draft risk appetite statement and noted progress towards implementing the new strategic risks and completing the risk improvement plan.