

Board minutes: 6 April 2022 | Electoral Commission Search

Board minutes: 6 April 2022 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 welcome Declarations of interest Minutes Commission Board

action tracker Forward Plan of Board business 2022/23 Chief Executive updates Annual

review of governance Commission Board effectiveness review 2020/21 Update on

Electoral Registration officer (ERO) performance standards Update on elections Annual

declaration of interests First published: 25 May 2022 Last updated: 29 June 2022

Meeting summary Date: Wednesday 6 April 2022 Time: 9:30am to 1:00pm Location: In

person and by video conference Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 18 May 2022

Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting John Pullinger, Chair Rob Vincent Sue

Bruce Alex Attwood Sarah Chambers Elan Closs Stephens Stephen Gilbert Alasdair Morgan

Joan Walley Katy Radford In attendance: Shaun McNally, Chief Executive Craig

Westwood, Director, Communications, Policy and Research Kieran Rix, Director, Finance

and Corporate Services Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance

Laura McLeod, Head, Regulatory Support Binnie Goh, General Counsel Zena Khan, Senior

Adviser, Governance Hannah Kavanagh, Legal Officer [meeting support] Tom Hawthorn,

Head, Policy [items 6b and 10] Mel Davidson, Head, Support and Improvement [items 9

and 10] Phil Thompson, Head, Research [items 9 and 10] Andy O'Neill, Head, Electoral

Commission, Scotland [item 10] Cahir Hughes, Head, Electoral Commission, Northern

Ireland [item 10] Rhydian Thomas, Head, Electoral Commission, Wales [item 10]

Apologies and welcome Apologies were received from Louise Edwards, Director,

Regulation. Laura McLeod [Head, Regulatory Support] attended and deputised in

Louise's absence. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Shaun McNally,

as he attended his first Commission Board meeting as the new Chief Executive.

Declarations of interest Commissioner Stephen Gilbert had previously declared that he

is a member of the select committee on fraud. The Board noted that declarations would

be included in the Commissioners Register of interests and published on the

Commission's external website in line with the Commissioners Code of Conduct.

Resolved: That the Board noted Commissioner Stephen Gilbert's declaration.

Minutes (EC 100/22) Resolved: That the minutes of the Board meeting on 23 February

2022 be agreed. Commission Board action tracker (EC 101/22) The Board noted updates

on ongoing work for the recruitment of the independent adviser to the Board on

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, planning for the October Board meeting in Northern

Ireland and support for Commissioners on using the functions on Objective Connect,

the board paper management system. Resolved: That the Board noted the progress

against actions requested by the Board. Forward Plan of Board business 2022/23 (EC

102/22) The Board discussed receiving regular updates on live matters that impact on

the range of the Commission's work, such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

matters, the Elections Bill and the PACAC report on the Commission. This could

include providing updates on topical items within the quarterly Chief Executive's

update report and scheduling items on Board away days. Resolved: That the Board

discussed and reviewed the Forward Plan of Board business for 2022/23, with pending

topical items to be scheduled in. Chief Executive updates (Oral) Introduction from

the new Chief Executive The Chief Executive, Shaun McNally, addressed the meeting by

thanking the Board Chair and the leadership team for welcoming him into the

organisation and providing an insight into the functions of the Commission through

induction meetings. The Board noted that the Chief Executive's initial focus was on

listening, including getting to know the Board, its challenges and focus across the

organisation. The Board welcomed the Chief Executive and looked forward to a

collaborative working partnership. Update on current activities including the Elections Bill The Director, Communications, Policy and Research provided an update on activity relating to the Elections Bill. The Board noted that there had been broad engagement with peers during the House of Lords' consideration of the legislation, from overview briefing meetings through to direct advice relating to amendments. It was noted that Commission briefing and advice had been widely welcomed, and its impact visible from the debates. Work on the secondary legislation was now beginning; and under the chair of the Director, Regulation, the Commission has strengthened its internal project governance to prepare for this next, complex phase of work. The Board noted that preparation for implementation was already beginning on those measures the successful implementation of which would require work to begin now to be able to meet expected timetables for commencement. Resolved: That the Board noted the updates. Annual review of governance Commissioner skills and linked Commissioners (EC 103/22) The General Counsel introduced the report, providing data from the survey taken in December 2021, on Commissioners' skills levels, experience and interest in key areas of the Commission. The Board discussed areas of the Commission where Board members could be brought into discussions where there was a need for expertise and where there are critical issues arising. The Board further discussed the nature of having linked commissioners to assist with the oversight of progressing Corporate Plan objectives. It would be important to manage the risk that a particular area was no longer visible in Board meeting discussions, due to a Member having a link to it. The Board welcomed the report and thanked the General Counsel for a useful and necessary paper. Resolved: That the Board noted the results of the skills audit and insights into the Board. Resolved: That the Board agreed Commissioners Joan Walley and Sarah Chambers be Linked Commissioners for public awareness work. We will be developing and implementing the campaign on voter ID and this is where the input of Commissioners would be helpful. (Putting voters first (CP Objective 3)). Resolved: That the Board agreed Commissioners Stephen Gilbert and Alasdair Morgan be Linked Commissioners for the Commission's IT upgrade, which is a significant project being planned and would benefit from Commissioners experiences. (A Modern and sustainable electoral system and Underpinning work (CP Objective 7 & 8)). Corporate Governance Framework (EC 104/22) The General Counsel introduced the report setting out the rules and responsibilities of Commissioners, the Board and Committees, together with its delegations. The Board discussed looking at providing further guidance on conflicts of interest for Commissioners in the next iteration of the Corporate Governance Framework. The General Counsel would liaise with Commissioners to draft a few sentences for more clarity in this area. Resolved: That the Board agreed the amended Corporate Governance Framework. Commission Board effectiveness review 2020/21 (EC 105/22) The General Counsel introduced the report on the outcomes of the Action Plan adopted in January 2021, following an external annual review of board effectiveness conducted in July 2020. Resolved: That the Board noted the completion of the 2020/2021 Action Plan and considered plans for forthcoming reviews of Commission Board effectiveness. Resolved: That the Board agreed Commissioner Rob Vincent would help shape the next reviews for 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. Update on Electoral Registration officer (ERO) performance standards (EC 106/22) The Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance introduced the report and was joined by the Head of Support and Improvement and Head of Research, providing an update on the new performance standards framework for EROs, and how it was operating in practice. The Board discussed the importance of outcomes and being able to understand the impact of EROs' activities and of our work to support and challenge them. Further work to

improve data and how we use it, as well as closer links to our wider research and electoral registration modernisation work, would aim to deliver improvements in these areas. The Board noted that a report on the 2021 registers and performance would be published following the May elections. Resolved: That the Board noted the content and progress made in using the framework to support and challenge EROs with planning for and delivering well-run electoral registration services across Great Britain. Update on elections (Oral) The Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance and Director, Communications, Policy and Research provided a presentation on the following headline topics: Elections taking place across the UK in May 2022 The policy and legislation framework for polls in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales Flexible voting pilot schemes in Wales Delivery of our election support activity on: Guidance, advice and support Party registration Monitoring, research and reporting Public awareness and voter information Election information and polling station finder Web and social media content Media engagement The Board held discussions on the pilot schemes and how these were selected, security and younger voter turnout, as well as on preparations for voting in Tower Hamlets, public health issues and Covid-19 protocols, postal voting and Royal Mail. Resolved: That the Board noted the content within the presentation. Annual declaration of interests (EC 107/22) Resolved: That the Board noted the declaration of interests of Commissioners and the Executive Team and for these to be published on the Commission's website.