

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 OBE (AM), chair of meeting Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy & Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Charlene Hannon, Head of Guidance (CH) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM) Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 3/09/2019) The minutes were agreed. LE provided an update on the action regarding PPP engagement with police SPOCs. LE offered to put the parties in touch with the SPOCs, but asked for more detail on the issues the parties wanted to discuss. AM explained the SPOC conference had provided a unique opportunity for parties to interact with SPOCs face-to-face. SM agreed it was particularly useful learning experience and to understand how deal with specific issues and gave the example of treating. SM highlighted that it had been useful to receive the case update and suggested this could be sent through by email in future. LE agreed to talk to the SPO, Garry Cann and put the parties in touch. Post general election review AM asked about duplicate registrations and suggested that despite the high numbers of people registering in the run up the election, it would be likely the vast majority won't be new registrations, but from people already on the register, who had been reminded to register. CW explained the Commission's public awareness campaign had achieved 2.6 million applications to register vote, but that the data on duplications was not yet available. CW explained the Commission was in the process of gathering evidence to inform its statutory report on the election that will be published in spring. He explained this included research with overseas voters, EROs and ROS and for the first time, included a survey of SPOCs. He welcomed any feedback from the parties. AW asked about the inconsistency of local authorities accepting scanned copies of applications to register to vote, noting the issue was with the guidance. CH explained this was covered in the guidance, but could be addressed through the Commission's support and improvement work. CH agreed to explore how the message could be strengthened in the guidance. SM noted the issue with accessing registers, particularly given the election took place during the annual canvass. AM, AW and GD agreed that all parties had the same issue in getting the updated registers in a reasonable timeframe and highlighted the difficulties that this presented, particularly given resources in electoral service teams. SM noted the ongoing issue that EROs continue to reissue registers without any explanation, rather than by an update. CH stated all registers would have been published by 1 December 2019. AW asked if the Commission had identified any regulatory trends or offences at the election. LE explained that the 2019 election had the highest number of registrations of non-party campaigners register for an election. LE noted the social media ad libraries had been a useful tool during the campaign and would be used to compare spending. AM suggested it would be interesting to see how many candidates failed to submit any adverts. Update on PFR online LE outlined the project is well advanced on the registration side and will be launched at the start of the parties financial year, January 2020. She noted parties can focus and submit reports for the unscheduled elections in 2019 on the old system. GD raised the issue of guidance on the Commission's website and suggested it should be ranked in the order it is likely to be used. He noted the recent general election guidance had appeared on page two. AM agreed it should have a higher ranking automatically. CH explained the Commission

was aware of this and working with developers to find a solution and make the algorithm smarter and user friendly. AM suggested that PPP members receive correspondence or an email when any new guidance is issued. LE offered to take this away to consider the possibility for future ERO Performance Standards Consultation CW highlighted the Commission's open consultation on new performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers. He explained the proposed standards are focussed on the outcomes that should be delivered, rather than the processes that are followed, with the objective of helping EROs and their teams to understand the impact of their electoral registration activities. CW welcomed any feedback from parties and noted the consultation would close on 31 March. Commission Update Report Regarding policy development grants, CW explained the Cabinet Office had drafted an amendment Order, which will give effect to the Commission's recommendations for changes to the scheme. He confirmed work is on-going with the Cabinet Office to ensure this is completed by the required deadline. LE updated on the Codes of Practice on election spending and explained a final draft would go to the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution by March. She asked for input on how to share updated Codes with the parties. AM suggested it would make sense to take time to reflect on the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election before submitting the Codes. AW agreed. LE explained the Commission is currently planning to review the conference stand rate this year, and will consult with parties. LE asked if by end of summer was going to be viable and offered to send a more granular timetable to PPP members. AM raised the issue of defining parliamentary lounges, that were not a fixed stand. AW gave the example of how a LGA stand would factor into sponsorship and suggested parties need additional guidance. LE offered to take this away and report back with a timetable. Forward looking Commission activity CW explained the Commission had agreed with the Speakers' Committee to submit an interim corporate plan. CW highlighted the next six months would be spent producing a new five-year corporate plan, noting the welcome opportunity to take a fresh view of the challenges and opportunities ahead for the democratic processes. He suggested the September PPP meeting would be an opportunity to get parties' input into the plan. SM, AM, AW, GD all agreed. AM raised the issue of fixed thresholds and explained that the original legislation envisaged a single electoral register. LE noted the Commission has to use single registers to check donations. CW explained the benefits of modernising the registers would have for a number of stakeholders. Any other business SM noted the commitment to have an Association of s representative at the next meeting, after May local elections. AM asked for an update on the work on the Commission's new Enforcement Policy. LE confirmed the Commission planned to consult later this year and re-offered the PPP members the opportunity to meet once the consultation opens. LE highlighted Majella La Praik would be on maternity leave from March, and recruitment for her cover will begin shortly. Commission actions Status To put PPP members in touch with Deputy Chief Constable Gary Cann, lead for election related crime at the National Police Chief's Council. Ongoing: Louise has spoken to Gary Cann and will put parties in touch To invite a representative from the Association of s to attend the PPP meeting in June Completed: Peter Stanyon will attend the June meeting Provide a timetable for the review of Party conference stands Ongoing: update to be provided at meeting Provide detail on how many of the applications to register to vote at the 2019 UKPGE were duplicates. Completed To use the September meeting to discuss the Commission's next five year corporate plan with parties Ongoing: to be added to agenda for September meeting