

have to consider alternatives where we could. James Newman (JN) advised on Scottish Government thinking behind the revisions to the Coronavirus Act 2020. He noted that the Clackmannanshire East by-election had been postponed before the Act was in place. A number of Council by elections in Scotland had since been postponed under the Act. Postponement provisions currently run only until May 2021. Scottish Government were considering options for the May 2021 election should restrictions continue. SM asked if any consideration had been given to the application of the "6-month rule" when meetings were not physically held. Important that this did not create unintentional vacancies. Malcolm Burr (MB) indicated he was happy to speak to Solace about the 'six month rule'. MB noted the potential impact of vacancies on the ability of smaller local authorities to conduct business. He thought that it was important not to lose sight of the 'local' impact of vacancies. He indicated his view that by elections should be held as soon as practically possible. Craig Chalcraft (CC) noted that Parliamentary time is limited in terms of providing scope for legislative change going forward. Andy O'Neill (AON) noted the Electoral Commission had no official view on the terms of the letter but, essentially, thought the Scottish provisions were a subtle solution which allowed by-elections to take place when they could. He acknowledged the particular issues and difficulties of holding Council by elections on the same day as Scottish Parliamentary elections. Dame Susan Bruce (SB) agreed that it would be preferable not to hold Council by elections on the same day as the Scottish Parliament poll, given experience of the past. She did not feel Scottish elections required alignment with England and Wales arrangements. Chris Highcock (CH) expressed the view that there should not be undue delays to the democratic processes while accepting that there would be practical difficulties in holding by elections during restrictions. SM thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion.

Scottish Government update James Newman (JN) and Iain Hockenhull provided the following updates: The prisoner voting aspects of the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Act 2020 had been implemented. The remaining provisions were likely to be commenced from early August 2020 with secondary legislation being introduced to the Scottish parliament imminently. A provisional date had been set for Stage 3 consideration of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill. Confirmation of the date was awaited. Work has started on the Conduct Order for the 2021 Scottish Parliament election. Consideration is being given to any impact from Covid-19 on how the poll may be conducted. The E-counting project for the 2022 elections is progressing, with the contract out to tender. AON highlighted the impact that any delay to the Bill would have on the Commission's accountability to the Scottish Parliament and for Codes of Practice. JN acknowledged the concern. SM referred to the issue he had raised with Scottish Government on Bill related to local government candidate spending. IH advised that the issue was being considered. SM asked if any other amendments were likely to appear in the SP Conduct Order. JN advised that the Order was likely to be an updated version of the 2015 Order, plus any essential changes. In respect of the E-counting project, SM noted he had looked at the public procurement document through the public contracts website. He asked why the specification required the first preference graphs to stop at the 80% votes threshold. JN said he would discuss with CH and others and come back to the PPP.

Scotland Office update Craig Chalcraft (CC) provided an update on the review of UK Parliamentary boundaries. The UK Government had decided that the number of UK constituencies would remain at 650 with no change to the parliamentary quota levels. Future reviews would be conducted on that basis. Scottish Boundary Commission update The PPP noted the written update provided by Isabel Drummond-Murray (ID-M) who, while

present, was unable to be heard due to technical difficulties. The report highlighted the following: On 18 March, LGBCS submitted its recommendations to Scottish Ministers following its interim review of the boundary between Glasgow Provan and Coatbridge and Chryston constituencies. If accepted, the recommendations would realign the constituency boundaries with the Glasgow City and North Lanarkshire council area boundary further information was available on the website. In terms of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, LGBCS had completed its consultations in Na h-Heileanan an Iar, Orkney and Shetland Council areas. Consultations in respect of proposals for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas will expected to begin shortly. Recommendations for all 6 council areas would be submitted to Scottish Ministers in May 2021 in order that, if passed by the Scottish Parliament, changes would be in force for the local government elections expected in May 2022. Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill – The legislation has a number of potential implications for LGBCS including a name change to Boundaries Scotland; change in scheduling and approval process for reviews of both Scottish parliament constituencies and regions and a local government electoral arrangements; introduction of use of 2 and 5 member wards across Scotland. Review of UK Parliamentary constituencies in Scotland – the Minister for State for the Cabinet Office made a Written Ministerial Statement on 24 March setting out the Government's intentions regarding implementation of the 2018 Review and plans for future reviews. No further information was available at this time.

Royal Mail update Scott Forsyth (SF) talked about the accelerated plan prepared by Rachel Winham for the snap UKPGE in December 2019 to ensure processes were in place. Pressure on infrastructure reflected the pace required to execute an election in incredibly short timescales and at their absolute busiest period of the year. As a result of the truncated timelines, lessons were learned. SF confirmed procedures had been reviewed to ensure those improvements are in place for future campaigns.

Electoral Management Board update Pete Wildman (PW) updated on electoral registration. He reported on how Electoral Registration offices were operating under Covid-19 restrictions and noted the main focus of work was on the new style Annual Canvass which was likely to start on 3 August and included the enfranchisement of foreign nationals. EROs were considering the practicalities of how the work would be progressed. He indicated it was unlikely follow up visits to properties could take place under current restrictions and EROs would rely on telephone calls. Chris Highcock (CH) advised that the EMB had reviewed how the UK Parliamentary General election had gone and were now thinking about planning for the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections under future Coronavirus restrictions. In relation to comments from SB, he noted that the Election Reform Bill carried provisions for extending the role of the Electoral Management Board to Scottish Parliament elections. It would be important to see that Bill taken through to legislation. He noted the progress of the e-counting contract and agreed to look with JN at the issue raised by SM about first preference display screens. The Electoral Commission update Sarah Mackie (SMa) said the Electoral Commission's report on the 2019 UK Parliamentary elections confirmed the poll had, in general, been well run with high levels of satisfaction amongst voters. Some people indicated dissatisfaction with tactics used by parties in campaigning. There had been strain on electoral services, EROs and ROs in the run up to Christmas and extra pressure on the postal service; some related to voters already registered trying to register again. SM asked if the report should have said more about the provisions on the electoral register during the canvass. Only applied where the poll was after 1 December as opposed to election happening during the time. PW said they had certainly heard back from Scottish Government and Cabinet Office and is

something which needs to be looked at. He remarked that the Electoral Commission had also highlighted this as an issue. Martin McKeown (MMcK) reported that a consultation had recently been launched on the development of a Party and a Candidate Code of Practice for Scottish Parliament elections which will run until mid-July. This had already been highlighted to party members on the PPP and also directly with party treasurers. He confirmed he would be keen to hear views from people who have to comply with the Codes and would contact PPP party representatives to discuss. The aim was to have codes in place for the 2021 SP elections but this was dependent on the passage of existing legislation. MMcK advised that the 2019 electoral fraud data had been published and included a link to the data on the WC website. The data continued to show there is no real issue with electoral fraud in the UK. Users are able to analyse data on the website. SM asked questions in relation to what the data revealed about instance of personation in Scotland. From discussion it was acknowledged that allegations of personation could arise for a variety of reasons and that the issuing of a tendered ballot paper did not necessarily mean that an offence had occurred. A new tool had been published which allows spending of candidates at the 2019 UK Parliamentary election to be analysed. Gordon Dickson (GD) asked if the tool could be revised to draw out the Green parties from the 'other' category. MMcK undertook to raise this. AON updated on a request from Scottish Government that the Commission test the question of any future referendum on Scottish independence. The matter had been put on hold by the Board under the current restrictions. Scottish Ministers were aware. SM asked if the EC Board had ever refused to give advice to Government. AON said he would check records and report back to the panel. Dates of future meetings
2020 Tuesday 29 September at 2pm Tuesday 24 November at 10:30 am 2021 Thursday 21 January at 10:30 am Thursday 4 March at 10:30 am Related content Party registration decisions View our decisions on political party names, descriptions and emblems View current applications View the political party names, descriptions and emblems which we are currently considering as part of our assessment process Donations and loans Find out about donations and loans to a political party, individual or other organisation Registers of unincorporated associations Download and view the registers of unincorporated associations