

Board minutes: 22 September 2021 | Electoral Commission Search

Board minutes: 22 September 2021 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 welcomes Declarations of interest Minutes of the previous Board meeting Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27: Final Performance report quarter one 2021/22 Discussion on Board diversity and update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) activities Policy Development Grants scheme Dates of proposed Commission Board and Committee meetings 2022/23 Update from the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) Chair Update from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Annual review of complaints Chief Executive's update Commission Board action tracker Forward Plan of Board business Incoming Chief Executive salary First published: 4 January 2022 Last updated: 4 February 2022 Meeting summary Date: Wednesday 22 September 2021 Time: 9:30am to 12:50pm Location: In person and by video conference Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 20 October 2021 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: Bob Posner, Chief Executive Craig Westwood, Director, Communications, Policy and Research Louise Edwards, Director, Regulation Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance Kieran Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services Binnie Goh, General Counsel Zena Khan, Senior Advisor, Governance David Bailey, Head, Strategic Planning and Performance (items 4, 5, 6 and 12) Bola Raja, Performance and Planning Manager (item 4) Tim Crowley, Head, Digital Communications and Learning (item 4) Marcia Bluck, External Consultant (item 6) Carol Sweetenham, Head of Projects (item 6) Cindy Williams, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead (item 6) Daniel Stoker, Senior Advisor, Policy (item 7) Kate Engles, Policy Manager (item 7) Apologies and welcomes The Chair welcomed all to the first hybrid meeting of the Commission Board, with some attendees joining in person, following social distancing rules, and others joining remotely. The Chair welcomed Katy Radford, the new Commissioner for Northern Ireland, to her first Board meeting, participating as an observer while we wait for her signed Royal Warrant. The Chair advised that they would be joined by an external facilitator, Marcia Bluck at agenda item 6, to facilitate part of the discussions on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. It was noted that item 9 of the agenda (Incoming Chief Executive salary) would be taken at the end of all business items, as limited staff members would remain. Declarations of interest Commissioner Sue Bruce declared that she had stepped up from Deputy Chair to presently Chair the 'Prince's Foundation'. The Board noted that the Commissioners' Register of interests would be updated and this reflected on the Commission's external website in line with the Commissioners' Code of Conduct. Minutes of the previous Board meeting (EC 58/21) Resolved: That the minutes of the Commission Board meeting on 21 July 2021 be agreed. Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27: Final (EC 59/21) The Chief Executive introduced the report updating Commissioners on the present position with regards to processes for the three parliaments and on the final budgets. It was noted that Commissioners for Scotland and Wales would further review the cover letters to respectively the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd that will accompany the narrative for the Corporate Plan and Main Estimate. Resolved: That the Board agreed the final Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27 and associated budgets subject to further review of material to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd by the Commissioners for Scotland and Wales. Performance report quarter one 2021/22 (EC 60/21) The Chief Executive introduced the report providing a summary on progress. The Director, Finance and Corporate Services advised that he was

currently confident that financial pressures could be managed within budget, although he and the Chief Executive would be holding meetings with Directors during October to assure the mid-year forecasts. Commissioners discussed several aspects of recent performance including speed of complex investigations and staff turnover. The Board requested a paper to a future meeting showing the process of an investigation including the length of time it takes and outcomes. The Board further requested the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee to report back on staff turnover, liaising as necessary with the Audit and Risk Committee. Action: To bring back to a future meeting a paper on the process of an investigation, time allocated and outcomes. Action owner: Director, Regulation. Submitted by: December Board meeting. Resolved: That the Board noted the delivery of the work programme and considered areas where more scrutiny was required. Discussion on Board diversity and update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) activities (EC 61/21) The General Counsel introduced the item updating Commissioners on the recent progress made delivering the Commission's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The second item on well-being was deferred to a future meeting. The Board reviewed and discussed areas within the draft EDI Strategy including widening the range of groups reached such as carers and people with various disabilities and generally to recognise diversity of thought beyond the groups identified in law with protected characteristics. Serious consideration needs to be given to unconscious bias. Commissioners emphasised the importance of demonstrating commitment to the themes of the strategy rather than simply being compliant with rules. It was suggested that we should explore best practice adopted elsewhere, notably in Northern Ireland. The Board noted the importance of getting the strategy out and for the consultation to be put in place and the work programme introduced. Further progress will be reported to future meetings. The General Counsel introduced Marcia Bluck, an external consultant who led a session on exploring options to improve Board diversity. The Board noted a presentation focussing Commissioners on the following: Improving diversity at Board level Improving representation – protected characteristics and socio-economics Widening the perspectives of the Board Deepening authentic engagement with diverse groups The Board discussed various ways in which to build confidence and reputation and set clear objectives and value for individuals, including recruiting an independent advisor on EDI to the Board. The Board thanked Marcia for a provoking, thoughtful presentation and welcomed discussions. Further detail and job description for an EDI independent advisor to the Board will be brought back to a future meeting for agreeing. Action: The Board delegated authority to the Chief Executive and General Counsel to prepare further detail and job description, for an independent advisor on EDI to the Board and a mechanism for engaging Commissioners. Action owner: Chief Executive and General Counsel. Submitted by: October 2021. Resolved: That the Board noted and agreed the actions taken during this year to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Resolved: That the Board agreed for the Commission to go out to consultation on the EDI Strategy and the new EIA material. Policy Development Grants scheme (EC 62/21) The Chief Executive and the Director, Communications, Policy and Research introduced the report. The Executive invited the Board to agree the Alba party joining the Scheme, but wanted to further consider both how the allocation of grant should work and the additional recommendation. The Board agreed that the Alba party join the Scheme and delegated to the Chief Executive, with Director, Communications, Policy and Research, reviewing and then writing to the Board with proposed recommendations to the Minister. Board responses would enable the Chief Executive to finalise the approach and write accordingly to the Minister.

Action: The Board delegated to the Chief Executive, with the Director, Communications, Policy and Research to review how the grant will be allocated with the Alba party being part of the Scheme, then write to the Board with proposed recommendations to the Minister. Action owner: Chief Executive Submitted by: End of October Resolved: That the Board agreed to include the Alba Party as an eligible Scotland-only party. Dates of proposed Commission Board and Committee meetings 2022/23 (EC 63/21) The Chair advised Commissioners to liaise directly with the Board Secretary on slight adjustments to the proposed Board and Committee meeting dates for 2022/23. This would include a meeting for outside London and continuing to plan for hybrid meetings. Action: The Board Secretary would revisit the proposed Board and Committee meeting dates for 2022/23 incorporating a meeting outside London and continuation of hybrid meetings. Action owner: Board Secretary Submitted by: December 2021 Resolved: That the Board noted a revised proposal would be circulated by the Board Secretary on Board and Committee meeting dates for 2022/23. Update from the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) Chair (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chair of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) of their meeting held on the 20 July 2021. The Board noted an update on People Strategy followed by a presentation on COVID ways of working and wellbeing from the Head of Information, Communication and Technology. There was an update on the EDI Strategy from the Head of Projects and, a report on recruitment showing a low turnover. A report on the Executive salaries was agreed. Resolved: That the Board noted the oral update. Update from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) of their meeting held on the 21 September 2021. The Board noted a report on the Risk appetite statement of which recommendations will come to a future Board meeting for discussion, an oral update on the Risk improvement plan and oral updates from our internal and external auditors. It was noted that non-ARC Commission members would be welcome to observe a future ARC meeting. The Board noted a presentation on a deep dive into training and development of ARC members. There was a review of schedule of policies and codes which is done periodically. It was noted that within the post meeting discussion following main ARC business, a discussion was had about recruitment and retention in the Commission and a risk of losing corporate memory. A discussion on an action plan arose and a suggestion was to invite the Chair of RemCo to a discussion on this topic. The Board noted that it was Commissioner Alasdair Morgan's last ARC meeting serving on the Committee for 10 years and Commissioner Stephen Gilbert's first ARC meeting as a participating observer until he joins as a full member in November. Resolved: That the Board noted the oral update. Annual review of complaints (EC 64/21) The Director, Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report providing the Board with the annual review of complaints received during the period 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2021. The period also took into account data related to May 2021 elections. Resolved: That the Board noted and have been assured that complaints are dealt with appropriately and that any necessary action resulting from complaints was taken. Chief Executive's update (EC 65/21) Resolved: That the Board noted the introduction and update from the Chief Executive's report. Commission Board action tracker (EC 66/21) Resolved: That the Board noted the progress against actions requested by the Board. Forward Plan of Board business (EC 67/21) Resolved: That the Board reviewed and noted the Forward Plan of Board business scheduling further topics for the next few meetings. At this point staff colleagues and guests were asked to leave the meeting except for the Chief Executive, General Counsel, Director, Finance and Corporate Services and the Board Secretary. Incoming

Chief Executive salary (Oral) Director, Finance and Corporate Services introduced a paper following an Extraordinary meeting of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) on 17 September 2021 with recommendations to the Board. Resolved: That the Board agreed the recommendations of the Committee.