

Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel Meeting Minutes 10 November 2021 | Electoral Commission Search Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel Meeting Minutes 10 November 2021 You are in the Party panels section Home How we make decisions Party panels First published: 12 January 2022 Last updated: 26 January 2022 Attendees Attendees James Kelly, Scottish Labour Party (Chair) Matt Edmonds, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Scott Martin, Scottish National Party Paul Moat, Scottish Liberal Democrats Isabel Drummond-Murray, Boundaries Scotland Iain Hockenhull, Scottish Government James Newman, Scottish Government Chris Highcock, Electoral Management Board for Scotland Pete Wildman, Scottish Assessors Association (Chair of Electoral Registration Committee and EMB member) Hannah Standring, Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland Nathan Lappin, Office of the Secretary State for Scotland Rachel Winham, Royal Mail Scott Forsyth, Royal Mail The Electoral Commission: Dame Susan Bruce, Electoral Commissioner Alasdair Morgan, Electoral Commissioner Andy O'Neill, Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland Sarah Mackie, Manager, Electoral Commission, Scotland Martin McKeown, Senior Adviser, Elections & s, Scotland Catherine Heggie, Partnerships & Information Officer, Scotland Lindsey Hamilton, Business Support Officer (Minutes) Apologies John Hardy, Scottish Green Party; Malcolm Burr, Electoral Management Board for Scotland and Maria McCann, Scottish Government. Apologies Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising The minutes of the last meeting held on 15 September 2021 were approved. Matters arising: Martin McKeown (MMcK) confirmed candidate consent forms for 2022 could be completed electronically. Chris Highcock (CH) said they were now liaising with Fujitsu, who are to deliver the counting project next year, to develop a mechanism to allow consolidation of results which will be hosted through or on the Electoral Management Board website. Andy O'Neill (AON) confirmed Alex Attwood's details had been shared and he had met with the Scottish Green Party and Alba Party. With regard to how the panel meetings are held in future, AON would seek views of attendees. ACTION: Andy O'Neill Preparations for Scottish Council elections 2022 Legislation Iain Hockenhull (IH) advised that all the pending legislation for the May polls had now been considered by the Scottish Parliament and would be commenced as per the SSIs. Guidance MMcK advised that the majority of core guidance had been published. Some resources on the RO side would be updated over the coming weeks. On the candidates and agents side it was intended that Part 3 on spending rules would be published before Christmas and parties would be informed when they were published. He asked for the panel's assistance in disseminating the guidance to candidates and agents and offered to provide briefings on the guidance to parties in due course. He confirmed that ROs and EROs would come together for a joint EC/EMB event on 27 January 2022. Scott Martin (SM) requested that election timetables aimed at candidates and agents include the dates for receiving and paying invoices. MMcK agreed to look at this. ACTION: Martin McKeown EMB Update Chris Highcock (CH) indicated that the EMB Convener had issued a number of directions to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers relating to the May 2022 Council elections seeking to achieve consistency in voter facing matters as well as appropriate resilience and robustness in the system. He noted that the direction relating to consistency in count timings (Friday 6 May) was in line with 2012 and 2017. A consistent script used by Returning officers declaring the results gave clarity to what information was provided to candidates and agents to ensure the law was met. Although it was not known what the public health context would be in May 2022, it was currently planned that the COVID-19 mitigations used at the May 2021 polls would remain in place. Scott Martin (SM) referred to the statutory obligation

to supply verification sheets at the counts. (CH) noted these were not direct outputs from the e-count system but agreed to consider how these are made available in a consistent manner. ACTION: Chris Highcock Matt Edmonds (ME) asked about the impact of the Easter Monday holiday on delivery of mail. Scott Forsyth (SF) asked advised that this had been factored in to their planning. E- Counting Project James Newman (JN) advised that the project had reached the end of the testing phase with high volume levels of testing during the rest of this month. Following this, there would be detailed engagement with councils regarding training and plans around count venues. He extended an invitation to members of the panel to view the system in the New Year and asked that anyone interested get in touch if they wished to attend. The Returning Officers of all four of the up-coming by-elections would use the 2022 counting system so there was an opportunity to see the new system in live operation. (JN) agreed to add members to the e-counting bulletins as previously agreed. ACTION: James Newman Registration and Absent Voting Pete Wildman (PW) noted that most, but not all EROs planned to issue a Household Notification Letter (HNL) in late January/early February. This had proved effective in the run up to the Scottish parliament election. While this was not a statutory requirement, all those EROs who had funding available intended to repeat the exercise. Public Awareness and Partnership Activity Catherine Heggie (CHe) briefed the Panel on the 'Welcome to your vote' awareness week planned for 24-30 January designed to encourage schools to hold political literacy sessions. The Commission would provide new education resources, including full lesson plans and 15 minute activities which could be used in classes, during registration or at assemblies. The initiative is supported by ADES, Education Scotland and other education partners and a communication would be sent to schools next week. The aim of the awareness week was to encourage registration among young people and support their understanding of how to vote using Single Transferrable Vote (STV). The Commission would be running online events for teachers to support them with using the resources. (CHe) said the Commission would provide an update on wider public awareness plans at the next meeting of the SP PPP. Matt Edmonds (ME) asked that the education resources be shared with parties when available. (CHe) agreed to share them with members. ACTION: Catherine Heggie UK Elections Bill Hannah Standring (HS) advised that the Scottish Government had written to the UK Government requesting that all matters related to devolved elections in Scotland be removed from the Bill. The respective policy teams were working closely to ensure any unnecessary divergence was managed. (IH) said the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) was with the Minister and would be considered by the Standards Committee on 18 November. The Scottish Government was likely to consider legislation where necessary would be taken forward in a Scottish Government Bill in 2023 following consultation. Updates (not related to Scottish Council elections 2022 at item 4 Scotland Office/Cabinet Office (HS) advised the second reading of the Dissolution of Parliament Bill was scheduled for 24 November 2021. Boundaries Scotland Isabel Drummond-Murray (ID-M) advised that of the six SIs going through Parliament, four had been approved and two withdrawn. (ID-M) encouraged all to return their responses to the 2023 consultation on UK Parliamentary constituencies which began earlier this year. Royal Mail (SF) confirmed their planning was on track. The Election Team would begin contact with local authorities in January regarding election plans. During the election period they would hold weekly calls with Chris Highcock and Pete Wildman. Electoral Management Board for Scotland Pete Wildman (PW) reminded all of the joint RO/ERO seminar scheduled for January 2022 where any issues could be addressed. He noted that with the exception of those holding by-elections, the new electoral registers would be published on 1

December. The Electoral Commission (MMcK) advised that the deadline for registration of party names, emblems and registered descriptions in advance of the May polls was 21 January 2022, to give time to process changes for when they will be needed. He asked members to share the deadline with party colleagues. The stakeholder survey (flagged in the October Regulatory Bulletin) aimed at collecting feedback on perceptions of the Electoral Commission's role, the way they communicate with stakeholders and how they could provide better support. He encouraged parties to respond. PF Online - work had been ongoing for a couple of years to redesign the portal and it was expected to be available to party administrators in due course. At the end of October, the under £250,000 party spending returns from the 2021 Scottish Parliament election were published. The over £250,000 will be published in due course as well as information on candidate spending. MMcK will inform the panel in due course. ACTION: Martin McKeown Dates of Future Meetings 2022 20 January; \*8 March; 16 May Party Pre-meeting 10:30 and meeting proper at 11:00 am except for \*8 March which will be 2:30 pre-meeting and 3:00 pm meeting AOCB MMcK added that the Electoral Commission would invite the lead SPOC from Police Scotland to a future meeting in the run up to elections to focus on candidate safety and other matters.