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On this page Elections Act 2022 – DLUHC Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/6/2022) Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising Format and dates of future meetings Any other business First published: 6 December 2022 Last updated: 6 December 2022 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB), chair of meeting Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM) Jonathan Burkitt (JB) Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Plaid Cymru: Carl Harris (CH) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Apologies: Geraint Day, Plaid Cymru Chris McEleny, Alba Party

Elections Act 2022 – DLUHC BC provided an update on Elections Act implementation, including that the UK Government had launched a consultation on a draft Strategy and Policy Statement for the Commission. She noted the consultation would last 14 weeks and that the draft was similar to the illustrative version published during the Bill's passage through Parliament. BC added that the Government intends to have the voter ID secondary legislation in place in January, and that the term 'voter card' had been replaced by 'voter authority certificate'. BC also noted that notional expenditure and political finance changes were expected to be in force from November/December 2022, and that the Commission had launched a consultation on draft updated guidance on the Act's accessibility measures. Implementation on other measures would resume after the May 2023 elections. SM asked for an updated implementation timetable to be circulated by email. BC agreed to this, and noted that the only significant change since a previous timetable was shared with the PPP was that the Government had decided to delay implementation of the postal vote handling measures until autumn 2023. JH confirmed that the previous timetable for party and campaigner measures was still correct. AW asked whether the Government intends to implement voter ID at the May 2023 elections, noting concerns about the implications of the short timetable for electoral administrators and political campaigners. PD confirmed this was the intention, but that the Government is conscious of the work needed. KB noted concerns raised by some electoral administrators who were unsure or unaware of voter ID being in place in May. PD said they should be aware given DLUHC's communications and engagement with the sector. BC added that while there may be more for DLUHC to do, all administrators should have received some form of confirmation that the changes were going ahead in May. CW noted the upcoming AEA conference would be an opportunity for AEA members to hear the latest on the Act, including the Commission's views. AW also asked if any consideration had been given to implementation being affected by a potential UK Parliamentary general election. PD confirmed that, if an election were held before May 2023, voter ID would not be in place. He added that conversations were taking place to consider preparations for any unscheduled election, including with suppliers. LE explained that if a general election was held before the party and campaigner measures were in place, and before the Code of Practice on third party campaigner spending was approved by Parliament, the Commission would help provide clarity on the rules in place at the time of an election or regulated period. KB asked for an update on guidance for reporting spending on party leaders' tours, noting this had been raised at the June 2021 PPP meeting. JH explained DLUHC had discussed this with the Commission, and that the Commission had produced updated guidance at the May 2022 elections which DLUHC are

comfortable covers the issue. KB highlighted the guidance doesn't cover the specific concerns she had raised about categorising national or local spending. JH said that guidance encourages campaigners to apportion costs in line with the purpose of the leader's tours, in terms of whether it is national or local spending. LE said that the Commission had tweaked its guidance and would do so in line with the Elections Act changes on notional spending, and that while it was not aware of a significant issue in the past with leaders' tours and reporting spending, she understood the perception and concern. She added that the Commission wanted to facilitate lawful campaigning, which was a key reason why the regulatory support team was investing in stronger advice provision to help parties get their returns right. CH asked whether a broader conversation could be facilitated beyond requests for bespoke advice. LE said the Commission would consider the best way to approach the issue. SM noted the Commission's proposals to consult on a draft code of practice for third party campaigners, and its difference to a previous code of practice on spending for parties and campaigners that had not been approved by Parliament. JH explained that the difference was that the code on third party spending was a statutory duty introduced by the Elections Act. The draft code on spending for parties and campaigners had not been approved by Ministers as, at the time, Government felt it more appropriate to wait until the Elections Act had been passed. LE added that the Commission was keen for the codes to be statutory to provide parties and campaigners with a solid, legal reference point and a statutory defence if needed. JH agreed to consider with the Commission if any adjustments to the draft code were needed and whether there was parliamentary time to approve it. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/6/2022) The minutes were approved without any changes. KB noted DLUHC had an outstanding action from the last meeting, to email the PPP members requesting information on supporting candidates with disabilities to stand at elections. PD confirmed he had not yet received further details from the group requesting this information. KB asked about timings for a PPP meeting with Electoral Commissioners. CW suggested looking at arranging this for June 2023. Members agreed. KB asked whether the changes to subscribers, raised by DLUHC at the last meeting, were now confirmed as going ahead. PD said they would be in place for the May 2023 elections. KB added that the Commission's roundtables on digital imprints, held after the last PPP meeting, had been very helpful. Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising SM asked for an update on Political Finance Online. LE confirmed under current planning assumptions a launch was still due at the end of the 2022/2023 financial year, but that she was considering the findings of an external review of the project. She confirmed a plan for training had been drafted. CH asked for this to be added to future PPP meeting agendas as a standing item, which was agreed. SM noted the parties had seen demonstrations of the registration aspect of the system, but not the donations. KB expressed concern about the timing of an end of financial year launch given the proximity to an election, and the need to train a small team, which CH agreed with. LE noted this feedback, and confirmed the parties would have fair warning about launch and training. Format and dates of future meetings The next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 6 December. KB asked whether PPP members wanted to continue with hybrid meetings, noting the technical issues experienced. PPP members were happy to continue. CW noted the Commission was happy to host the meeting if helpful, and would discuss with DLUHC. Any other business KB raised concerns about clarity of guidance on aggregation, suggesting there had been differing advice from the Commission between written guidance and verbal advice. LE agreed to check the guidance on the Commission's website was up to

date and confirmed with the other parties present that they had received a recent letter from the Commission on this point providing updated guidance. JH noted a letter shared with the PPP by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up on spending limits and security expenses, and that he looked forward to their feedback.

Commission actions Status Consider whether a seminar or roundtable to discuss how to report spending on leaders' tours is the best mechanism to support compliance. Re-circulate letter on aggregations. DLUHC actions Status Circulate updated Elections Act implementation timetable via email.