

Board minutes: 23 February 2022 | Electoral Commission Search

Board minutes: 23 February 2022 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 Update from the Extraordinary Board meeting Minutes Commission Board action tracker Forward Plans of Board business 2021/22 and 2022/23 Performance report quarter three 2020/21 Performance indicators and targets 2022/23 Updates on two stages of the Commission policy making and influencing process Update from the Audit and Risk Committee Chair Chief Executive update Registers of interests, gifts, donations and hospitality Deep dive strategic discussion: Risk appetite Incoming Chief Executive terms and conditions AOB First published: 5 May 2022 Last updated: 25 May 2022 Meeting summary Date: Wednesday 23 February 2022 Time: 9:00am to 1:20pm Location: In person and by video conference Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 6 April 2022 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 Kieran Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services Mel Davidson, Head, Support and Improvement Binnie Goh, General Counsel Zena Khan, Senior Adviser, Governance Hannah Kavanagh, Legal Officer Paul Redfern, Independent Advisor to the EC Audit and Risk Committee David Bailey, Head, Strategic Planning and Performance (items 8 and 13) Tom Hawthorn, Head, Policy (item 9) Niki Nixon, Head, Internal Communications (item 9) Phil Thompson, Head, Research (item 9) Apologies and welcomes Apologies were received from Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance. Mel Davidson (Head, Support and Improvement) attended and deputised in Ailsa's absence. The Chair advised that the first part of the meeting would be reserved to Commissioners and the Executive Team for follow up discussions following the Extraordinary Board meeting held last week. The main business of the meeting would commence from 0930. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, in particular Paul Redfern, Independent advisor to the Audit and Risk Committee. Paul would continue to maintain relationships with Commissioners and on occasion provide advice where applicable. Declarations of interest Commissioner Katy Radford declared the following interests: Commissioner Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (Remunerated) Chair Northern Ireland Committee British Council (Not remunerated) Employed by Commission for Victims and Survivors Northern Ireland Member of the Executive Council of the Belfast Jewish Community (Not remunerated) Social Partner on the Ards and North Down Borough Council Peace IV Partnership Commissioner Stephen Gilbert declared the following updates: Chairmanship and membership of Digital and Comms select committee ended on 20 January 2022 Membership of Online safety scrutiny committee ended on 11 December 2021 The Board noted that in order to support a paper going to the next Board meeting on annual declarations of interests, Commissioners should forward any updates on their declarations of interests to the governance team. The Board noted that these declarations would be included in the Commissioners Register of interests and uploaded onto the Commission's external website in line with Commissioners Code of Conduct. Update from the Extraordinary Board meeting (EC 89/22) There was a short discussion following the Extraordinary Board meeting held the previous week. Resolved: That the minutes of the Extraordinary Board meeting on 16 February 2022 be noted. Resolved: That the Board noted progress and actions arising. Minutes (EC 90/22) Resolved: That the minutes of the Ordinary Board meeting on 19 January 2022 be agreed. Commission Board action tracker (EC 91/22) The Board noted updates on ongoing

work with Political Finance Online, with continued scrutiny of the Audit and Risk Committee, to provide assurance to the Board on progress, proposals for an IT strategy including an update on board paper management systems, appointment of the Head of IT and additional posts for work on the Elections Bill. Resolved: That the Board noted the progress against actions requested by the Board. Forward Plans of Board business 2021/22 and 2022/23 (EC 92/22) The Board noted that reports on and EDI activities would be scheduled at the next two meetings. It was noted that Commissioners and senior colleagues would be contacted on their availability for the October Board meeting in Northern Ireland, in order to start the planning process for the agenda and wider activities. Resolved: That the Board reviewed and noted the Forward Plan of Board business for 2021/22 and 2022/23. Performance report quarter three 2020/21 (EC 93/22) The Chief Executive joined by the Director, Finance and Corporate Services introduced the report highlighting some of the key areas such as work underway with the May elections, preparatory work to support the roll out of Elections Bill provisions, decisions made on freedom of information requests with no challenges, progress on audit recommendations, progress made with Political Finance Online, cyber security, disaster recovery plans, regulatory investigations, annual finances and staff motivation and the changing nature of the workplace including hybrid working. Resolved: That the Board noted the delivery of the work programme and that the budget was managed. Performance indicators and targets 2022/23 (EC 94/22) The Chief Executive, joined by Director, Finance and Corporate Services and Head, Strategic Planning and Performance, introduced the report setting out the operational indicators and targets both for our own work and for the health of the electoral system. The Board discussed the number of indicators to consider and whether the balance was right for the Board, as lower level indicators should remain operational for the Executive. The Board noted that we have a new architecture for performance indicators focused on Corporate Plan objectives. This would require careful differentiation between those areas we control and those where we influence. The nuances need to be considered to facilitate action planning and management of variation. The Board thanked the Head, Strategic Planning and Performance and the team, for engaging with Commissioners to produce positive indicators developed across the organisation. Resolved: That the Board noted and are content with the 2022/23 indicators and targets for the health of the electoral system and for our corporate performance subject to review by the Executive to ensure clarity of language and focus of intent. The key corporate indicators will be used for presentation externally side by side with the new corporate plan. Updates on two stages of the Commission policy making and influencing process (a) Priority policy recommendations (EC 95/22) The Director, Communications, Policy and Research introduced the report, with updates provided by Head of Policy, Head of Internal Communications and Head of Research. The Board discussed areas on modernising voting and political finance, recognising overall progress to take forward aligned to the corporate plan. The Board noted the value of engagement with parliamentary committees at UK level and in Scotland and Wales. Resolved: That the Board noted progress on previously agreed priorities. (b) Horizon scanning (EC 96/22) The Director, Communications, Policy and Research advised the Board that an updated version of this paper would be circulated following the meeting. Action: To circulate latest version of the horizon scanning report to Commissioners. Action owner: Senior Governance Adviser Update from the Audit and Risk Committee Chair (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chair, Audit and Risk Committee of their meeting held on 22 February. The Board noted updates on audit controls, an oral update from the National Audit Office on the

annual report which was still in its early stages, but that it would be reported to the next scheduled Audit and Risk meeting, that it had received the operational and organisational risk registers and, that risk appetite would be covered in a deep dive discussion item at the end of the Board agenda. Resolved: That the Board noted the oral update.

Chief Executive update (Oral) The Board received an oral update from the Chief Executive on operations and matters arising since the last Board meeting. The Board noted updates on the May elections, including guidance on new legislation and on Covid-19 measures which have been published on our website. It was noted that results of the PACAC report on the work of the Commission was expected soon. The Board noted that the Commission was moving back to hybrid working with different approaches across the different offices, reflecting the relevant government public health advice in each case. The Board noted that the Executive Team had been in touch with the incoming Chief Executive with arrangements for his induction. It was noted that the recruitment of a new Head of HR and Head of IT have been completed with appointments offered and accepted. Resolved: That the Board noted the oral updates.

Registers of interests, gifts, donations and hospitality (EC 97/22) The Board noted that the current register of interests would be circulated to Commissioners for further updates, in order to present the annual report due at next month's meeting. Resolved: That the Board noted the report.

Deep dive strategic discussion: Risk appetite (EC 98/22) The Director, Finance and Corporate Services provided a presentation on the following: Remit risk Corporate risk Our next steps leading to an agreed risk appetite statement Risk improvement plan The Board discussed the aspects of developing risks, measuring against performance management and the corporate plan and how to mitigate and manage future issues. The Board noted the need to differentiate effectively between those areas where there is a higher risk tolerance and those where tolerance is lower. The Board also noted the impact on management of multiple unrelated risks crystallising at the same time. Resolved: That the Board noted the presentation and agreed next steps to come back to a future Board meeting.

Incoming Chief Executive terms and conditions (EC 99/22) Resolved: That the Board noted the recommendation of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee taken via e-business on 17 February 2022 and decision by Chair under delegation from the Board on 8 December 2021. AOB The Board noted that this would be Bob Posner's last Board meeting as Chief Executive as he takes up his retirement, and thanked Bob for all he has done for the organisation with grace and determination, which helped shape the Commission as it is today, and wished him all the best on his retirement. Bob Posner addressed the Board thanking them and reflecting on his time at the Commission totalling 15 years.