

## Scottish Parliament Political Parties Panel Minutes: 7 June 2019 | Electoral

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Scottish Parliament Political Parties

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closer liaison between Police and party central offices in the run up to, and during, electoral events; Impact of lower campaign spending limits in Scotland; Need to consider arrangements for publicising location of polling places on a national basis. Noted. Electoral Management Board (EMB) update CH advised that the Regional Returning Officer (RRO) for the Scotland Electoral Region, Kenneth Lawrie of Falkirk Council, had overall responsibility for the delivery of the EPEs, assisted by local ROs across Scotland. The EMB took on a coordinating role and assisted the RRO to deliver the poll and collate the result. CH provided an overview of the role played by the EMB during the elections. Overall the EPEs were delivered successfully but there are always learning points. The short timeframe of the EPEs provided particular problems around staffing. The EMB continues to be aware of the need to strengthen the resilience of the electoral community in Scotland e.g. through mentoring of Returning officers. CH advised the EMB intended to hold a post event review in early July where lessons for future events will be discussed. He agreed to raise the issues discussed under the previous item of business as appropriate. Police Scotland update POC provided the PPP with an overview of the arrangements put in place by Police Scotland during the European Parliamentary elections to co-ordinate responses to any issues around disorder or electoral integrity across Scotland. In particular he highlighted the role of the Divisional SPOCs in liaising with Returning Officers and their teams. Police Scotland also work closely with the EMB and the Electoral Commission to ensure that SPOCs are trained in their specific roles. The PPP discussed the need for clarity on how party activists and others could timeously report issues of concern to the Police during elections and the response they should reasonably expect from Police Scotland. Noted. Scottish Government update MMcC and RW provided the PPP with progress reports in respect of (i) the forthcoming Franchise and Electoral Reform Bills; (ii) preparations for canvass reform in Scotland; (iii) ballot order testing to be undertaken by The Electoral Commission; and (iv) the Referendums (Scotland) Bill. It was agreed that the PPP be kept informed of future developments in these areas as appropriate. Scotland Office update MMcK advised that the Scotland Office would not be represented at the meeting but had produced a written report. He agreed to circulate the report following the meeting. Noted. Scottish Boundary Commission update IDM provided the PPP with updates on (i) a judicial challenge to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's proposals for new constituencies; (ii) recruitment of new Boundary Commissioners for Scotland; (iii) progress of Island Council reviews; and (iv) administrative reviews. Noted. Electoral Commission update The PPP was provided with information on the following areas: Response to Inquiry on Electoral Law Reform MMcK advised that the UK Parliament's Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee had launched an inquiry examining the case for a comprehensive review of electoral law. The Commission had responded to the call for evidence and a copy of the response was tabled. The response supported the need for simplified and modernised electoral law and confirmed the Commission's willingness to work with Governments and legislatures to achieve that aim. MMcC stressed the importance of involving the Scottish Law Commission in any future work to simplify and modernise electoral law. Ballot Order Testing AON confirmed that the Commission had been invited by Scottish Government to undertake research to find solutions to the "list order effect" for Scottish Council elections. He provided an overview of the approach being taken to test two alternatives – order by lot and A-Z, Z-A ordering. Ipsos Mori were engaged to carry out testing with electors and fieldwork would be carried out over summer. The Commission would also be consulting with key stakeholders, including political parties, with a report produced by September. Codes

of Practice RMcD provided an update on the work being undertaken to produce two Codes of Practice: one on candidate election spending and one on Party spending. The codes were prepared primarily in relation to UK Parliamentary elections. The codes had been re-drafted following the formal consultation that ran in autumn 2018. Copies of these were shared with the PPP. The Codes would now be finalised, following a roundtable with representatives of the Westminster PPP earlier in the week. The Commission was working to develop similar Codes of Practice for devolved elections in Scotland and Wales. Date of next meeting Wednesday 20 November 2019 Action items Action items Owner(s) Deadline 6 Chris Highcock July 8 MMcC, RW Future meeting 9 MMcK ASAP