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Board minutes: 23 September 2020 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 Declarations of interest Minutes of items of electronic business (EC 74/20) An update – the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) review on aspects of electoral regulation (EC 75/20) Review of Commission Board Effectiveness (EC 77/20) Performance report – Quarter 1 2020/21 (EC 78/20) Chief Executive's update (EC 79/20) Update from the Chair of RemCo (verbal update) Business items taken via electronic means since the previous Board meeting Individual Staffing Issue (eEC 72/20) First published: 14 October 2021 Last updated: 14 October 2021 Meeting summary Date: Wednesday 23 September 2020 Time: 9:30am to 1:15pm Location: By video conference Date of next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 21 October 2020 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting John Holmes, Chair Sue Bruce Anna Carragher Sarah Chambers Elan Closs Stephens Stephen Gilbert Alasdair Morgan Rob Vincent Joan Walley In attendance: Bob Posner, Chief Executive (Items 1 to 10) Craig Westwood, Director, Communications, Policy and Research (Items 1 to 10) Louise Edwards, Director, Regulation (Items 1 to 10) Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance (Items 1 to 10) Kieran Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services Amanda Kelly, General Counsel (Items 1 to 10) David Bailey, Head of Strategic Planning and Performance Phil Thompson, Head of Research (Items 4 and 5) Sean Usher, Senior Advisor, Governance (Items 1 to 10) Carol Sweetenham, Head of Projects (Item 5) Tracey Blackman, Head of Finance & (Item 5) Dan Adamson, Head of Monitoring and Enforcement (Item 4) Susan Crown, Head of Campaigns and Corporate Identity (Items 4 and 5) Rhydian Thomas, Head of Electoral Commission, Wales (Items 5 and 8) Andy O'Neill, Head of Electoral Commission, Scotland (Item 5) Niki Nixon, Head of External Communications (Items 4 and 5) Orla Hennessy, Media Relations and Public Information Manager (Items 4 and 5) Laura Mcleod, Public Affairs Manager (Items 4 and 5) Apologies There were no apologies. Declarations of interest There were no new declarations of interest. Minutes of items of electronic business (EC 74/20) Resolved: That the Commission Board minutes of items of electronic business from 15 June 2020 be approved. An update – the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) review on aspects of electoral regulation (EC 75/20) The Chief Executive and Director of Regulation presented the paper and provided the Board with an overview of the key updates arising from the work of the CSPL. Resolved: Consultation on a prosecutions policy be deferred The Forward Planner be amended to reflect changes in the work programme 2021/2022 Budget and Plan submissions to the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru (EC 76/20) The Board noted that financial timetables in the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru required our budget to be submitted to the relevant scrutiny committees by the end of September preceding the financial year, much earlier than the Westminster process. It was noted that the Board would not be tied to this budget until next year. It was hoped that there would be no major changes in the meantime, but there was the impact of Covid-19 to consider. The proposed budget was in line with what had been contained in the published Corporate Plan (CP1). The Board noted that it had received previous papers on the implications and practicalities of devolved accountability and had set a direction of travel. This paper sought agreement on how those arrangements should apply in the first full year and how they might be taken forward thereafter. The Board also welcomed that the discussions with the devolved administrations had taken place in a very constructive spirit. Resolved: That the overall budget and the individual Estimates based on that budget be approved, with delegation of final approval of budgets to the Chief Executive and

Accounting Officer, in consultation with the Chairs of the Board and Audit Committee, pending advice from HM Treasury and agreement with officials in devolved legislatures and governments on the funding formula That the approach to the information to be submitted with the Estimates be approved, subject to final agreement of the text by the respective two Commissioners with lead responsibilities for the Commission in Scotland and Wales and the Chief Executive That the draft Funders' Memorandum of Understanding be agreed, with delegation of approval of the final document to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and the respective two Commissioners with lead responsibilities for the Commission in Scotland and Wales Review of Commission Board Effectiveness (EC 77/20) The Chair introduced the Review, and its main recommendations. While the Chair did not necessarily agree with everything in the Review, its principal findings were useful and in line with issues already raised by the Board, some of which were already being addressed. Commissioners discussed the Review. The consensus was it had good points to take away but was not as challenging as would have been desirable in some areas and was therefore of limited value. It was noted that the Review contained recommendations for the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) and Audit Committee. These would be discussed at the next meetings of these Committees. Action: The Executive Team in consultation with two Commissioners to prioritise which recommendations to take forward in an action plan to be approved by the Board. Resolved: That the report be noted That an action plan be brought to the Board for approval Performance report – Quarter 1 2020/21 (EC 78/20) The Board was informed that the report had been compiled using a new system, Pentana, for the first time. Commissioners were generally supportive of the new format. The Board discussed the various risks highlighted in the report and noted that risks to the reputation of the Commission needed to figure more prominently. It was also noted that the effect of the new No Purchase Order, No Pay policy was an internal metric rather than an overall performance metric. The Board discussed staff turnover and queried how Covid-19 had impacted on it and the ability to recruit high quality staff. Resolved: That the report be noted. Chief Executive's update (EC 79/20) The Board noted the update on operations and matters arising. The Board discussed the preparation for the 2021 polls and the impact of Covid- 19 on all aspects of the democratic process, including on the provision of postal votes and the potential increase in demand. The Board noted the work being done by the Commission to manage the challenges of the 2021 polls. This included plans to publish guidance relating to the impact of the pandemic. The Board noted that the recent All Staff Briefing had been well received, and provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements and forward work programmes. The Board discussed the important work of the Commission's partners in the third sector. A wide range of charities and democracy focused groups assisted the work of the Commission, and the Board requested to be updated on this work as it developed. The Board discussed the Annex to the update, on the policy approach to voter registration campaigns. Commissioners noted support for the shift in focus towards known under-registered demographics. Resolved: That the update on operations, matters arising, and the Policy Approach, be noted. Update from the Chair of RemCo (verbal update) The Chair of RemCo provided an update on the work of RemCo including its last meeting in July. The most significant item related to the Staff Survey and the findings of that survey. The survey results had been positive overall but there were still negative points related to issues including staff progression through the Commission, and diversity. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy would be on the agenda of RemCo in October, as well as pay and the impact of Covid-19 on the work of the Commission. Resolved: That the

update from the Chair of RemCo be noted. Business items taken via electronic means since the previous Board meeting There were no new comments or amendments. Individual Staffing Issue (eEC 72/20) All staff left the meeting except for the Director of Finance and Corporate Services as acting Accounting Officer, and the Head of Strategic Planning and Performance acting as Board Secretary. Resolved: The recommendations of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee be approved, subject to the Commission Chair and the Chair of the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Corporate Services as acting Accounting Officer, agreeing conditions to reflect Board's comments on the topic.