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First published: 14 October 2021 Last updated: 14 October 2021 Meeting summary Date:

Wednesday 31 March 2021 Time: 9.30am to 1pm Location: By video conference Date of

next scheduled meeting: Wednesday 21 April 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the

meeting Board members: Rob Vincent - Meeting chair Sue Bruce Alex Attwood Sarah

Chambers Elan Closs Stephens Stephen Gilbert Alasdair Morgan Joan Walley In

attendance: Bob Posner, Chief Executive Craig Westwood, Director, Communications,

Policy and Research Louise Edwards, Director, Regulation (joined the meeting at item

4) Ailsa Irvine, Director, Electoral Administration and Guidance Kieran

Rix, Director, Finance and Corporate Services Chantelle Shokar, Legal Officer Zena

Khan, Senior Adviser, Governance Apologies and introductions Apologies were received

from Binnie Goh, General Counsel. The Meeting Chair welcomed all to the meeting

advising that Royal Warrants had been received for Sue Bruce, Elan Closs Stephens and

Alex Attwood. Declarations of interest There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of the previous Board Meeting (EC 20/21) Resolved: That the minutes of the

Commission Board meeting on 24 February 2021 be approved. Update on elections (Oral)

The Board received an oral update from the Chief Executive, Director, Electoral

Administration and Guidance and Director, Communications, Policy and Research. The

Board noted that we're continuing to engage at a UK-wide level, through national and

regional forums and individually with local authority chief executives and election

teams. We have started our weekly meetings of the Electoral Coordination and Advisory

Board which brings together officials from the three governments, Regional Returning

Officers from across the UK and representatives from stakeholder groups such as

Solace, the AEA and the SAA. We have been working closely with the Electoral

Management Board in Scotland and the Electoral Coordination Board in Wales to support

them in their work to coordinate the delivery of the polls, and working similarly

with London Elects and the GLA team in relation to the London elections. The Board

noted that the Cabinet Office election cell is standing up, and will also be

incorporating security issues for Scotland and Wales. The cell brings together the

various agencies and departments with responsibility for security, law enforcement,

civil contingency, disinformation and the Commission, and seeks to manage strategic

risks to the election. The Board noted that we are continuing to work with Royal Mail

closely, to understand progress with their preparations and their contingency

planning, with weekly meetings in place between Director, Electoral Administration

and Guidance and their Head of Elections. It was noted that a meeting was scheduled

after Easter Bank holiday for our and their Chief Executive to meet. The Board noted

that we had been working with the CPS and the NPCC, and in Scotland with Police

Scotland, to revise and reissue our joint guidance for candidates on how to minimise

the risk of intimidation while campaigning and how to report if it happens. This

guidance was widely welcomed in 2019. The Board noted that as of 30 March, we had

taken decisions on all 59 party registration applications received in January, for

which we had guaranteed a decision by the end of March. Thanks to a significant

effort from the party registration team and assistance by staff from other teams, we

have also taken decisions on 11 more applications that arrived in early February. Two parties were seeking urgent decisions on descriptions they wanted to use in Scotland, which have not yet been taken because of the lateness of the applications they made. The Commission had successfully defended court action from one of these parties. The Board noted progress with communications activity, in particular the 'Got 5?' voter registration campaign, which was progressing strongly against targets, with a total of 405K applications to register in Great Britain in the period 9 to 26 March, and over 37 million impressions/views of digital adverts in a similar period. Plans were progressing well to enable the postcode lookup to function well as a voter resource, with polling station data in so far from c.60% of councils. It was noted that the team was handling a spike in public queries, following the distribution of the voter information booklet in Scotland last week, and there was a continued push by us to generate media coverage to raise voter awareness of the need to register, the options for voting methods, and the safety arrangements for polling stations. Resolved: That the oral updates be noted. Annual review of governance (EC 21/21) The Board received the report as part of the annual review of the Corporate Governance Framework, highlighting changes already taken place and proposed minor changes. It was noted that minor amends to sections of 'Responsibilities of Individual Commissioners' and 'Members attending meetings by video or teleconference' will be reviewed and updated. Resolved: That the Board noted the following changes already taken place: agreed change of name of the Audit and Risk Committee agreed updates to the Terms of Reference for the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee at Annex H, as previously approved by the Board on 16 September 2020 agreed the amendment to the quoracy rules (Commission Board paper eEC 19/21) which was approved at the Extraordinary Board meeting of 4 March 2021 by email circulation, that this will no longer be incorporated into the Standing Orders, following the receipt of the Royal Warrants appointing Susan Bruce and Dame Elan Closs Stephens, by the terms of new standing order 15a, the approved amendment<sup>1</sup> automatically expired before incorporation. There are now four Commissioners appointed under the provisions of section 3A of the Act. Together with the appointment of Alex Attwood as Commissioner for Small Parties, there are eight Commissioners on the Board and the risk of permanent inquoracy has now been averted. Following these developments, the applicable rule on quorum is now standing order A132. Resolved: That the Board approved the proposed minor changes: the paragraphs on the Commissioner's accountabilities to the devolved governments at paragraphs 1.3 and 1.10, delegation of powers and duties diagram at page increased meetings for the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee at paragraphs 2.10 and Annex H10 removal of section on Steering Groups at paragraphs 2.19 – 2.20 now that they are defunct the transfer of Governance and other responsibilities to the General Counsel removal of reference to powers relating to European Parliamentary elections at page 20 the Guidance for Commissioners on claiming fees and travel and subsistence at appendix 4 of the Corporate Governance Framework to reflect the 2021 rates Risk framework (EC 22/21) The Board received a report providing the Board with an opportunity to review the Commission's risk management framework, and consider the headline actions from our risk improvement plan. It was noted that the plan was our response to the recent internal audit on risk maturity. The Audit and Risk Committee have endorsed this approach. That the Board noted the actions in the risk improvement plan. That the Board has scheduled a discussion on risk appetites, linked to the new Corporate Plan 2022/23 – 2026/27. Update on Board Effectiveness review action plan (Oral) This item was deferred to a future Board meeting. Governance matter (EC 23/21) At this point

the chairmanship was handed over to the Chief Executive to chair this item for avoidance of conflict. Resolved: That the Board noted the term dates of Rob Vincent's membership of RemCo from March 2020 until March 2023 and Chair of that Committee. Resolved: That the Board approved the reappointment of Elan Closs Stephens as member of Audit and Risk Committee from January 2021 until January 2024. The chairmanship was resumed by Rob Vincent for the remainder of the agenda. Commission Board action tracker (EC 24/21) The Board received the Commission Board action tracker noting further updates. Resolved: That the Commission Board action tracker be noted. Forward plan of Board business (EC 25/21) Commissioners discussed items of business for future meetings. These would be reflected in the Forward plan of Board business at the April meeting. Resolved: That the Forward plan of Board business be noted. Annual review of schedule of policies (EC 26/21) The Board received the report of our key policies setting out in table form, whether statutory or discretionary, their purpose, the policy 'owner', and when each policy is due for review. Resolved: That the Board was content that the Schedule of Policies had been reviewed and updated in line with the Corporate Governance Framework. Annual declaration of interests (EC 27/21) The Board received the report which shows Commissioners interests and any changes made. This is a regular requirement at the start of each Board meeting. Once a year, a paper is prepared with a list of all declared interests of Commissioners. Resolved: That the Board noted the annual declaration of interests and is content for this to be published on the Commission's website. Registers of interests, gifts, donations and hospitality (EC 28/21) The Board received a paper presenting the Commission's Registers of Interests, Donations, and Gifts and Hospitality. Resolved: That the Board noted the registers and for them to be published on the Commission's website