



Household Notification Letter sent out in February had resulted in a spike of postal vote applications shortly after, in his view, likely reducing the number of later applications. Postal vote rejection letters would be sent out by 27 May. Electoral administration / Nominations / Candidate briefings etc (CH) said it was essential that candidates and agents understood what was asked for and some forms required clarity of design, such as the home address form. He could only speak for City of Edinburgh Council but said the larger parties had allowed electronic submission first. (AON) said all councils offered early electronic submission and an overwhelming majority of candidates found this helpful and had taken it up. Paul Moat (PM) asked if the home address form could be reviewed so that it was less confusing but echoed the view expressed by others that electronic pre-checks of candidate's nominations forms had been invaluable and hoped they would continue. Postal voting (CH) was still looking through statistics but said the volume was not quite as high as last year's election. The postal voting figure was now not far off one quarter of the electorate. Rejection rates were slightly lower than in 2017 (SXM) felt there should be an emergency proxy provision for anyone who found their postal ballot had not arrived in time, given that a postal vote pack could be cancelled. (CH) said they were in the hands of the Royal Mail and with one million pieces of mail going out some of loss of mail will be experienced, but if people did not complain until after the election, there was nothing they could do. If people had got in touch earlier, a replacement pack could be sent out. Polling day issues (AON) said the Electoral Commission had observers at several of the council areas both on polling day and at the counts. Localised issues were dealt with but there was nothing which grew to any great problem. Sue Bruce (SB) agreed and said she had seen a trouble-free Election Day with a steady trickle of voters and Presiding Officers had dealt with all issues in their stride. She felt this was testament to the preparation put in and resulted in a well-run effective election. Verification and count (CH) said the count was the final element of what had gone before and could only work well if other steps were in place. The count solution had begun over two years earlier and had been a huge logistical operation to ensure all had equipment and training to deliver an electronic count. There had been challenges, technically and administratively, but had been delivered with results that all can have confidence in. James Newman (JN) echoed this and said a detailed survey of Returning Officers would be made so that lessons could be learned for the next e-counting project. Integrity issues Following liaison with SPOCs, (AON) said there seemed to have been fewer allegations and the biggest cause of complaint had been a lack of imprints on printed campaign materials. (CH) said using a single printer for the whole of Scotland meant poll cards and postal votes had arrived on doorsteps at the same time across Scotland. Early intervention had ensured a sufficient supply of paper had been purchased well ahead of need. Campaigning issues and campaign material (SXM) raised a number of issues regarding campaign expenditure guidance and the Electoral Commission's view with regard to what constituted candidate expenditure. (AON) indicated that the Electoral Commission would be happy to discuss the issue with (SXM). Public awareness (AON) said the rejection rate of votes had fallen slightly and the instance of multiple 'X's was slightly down although this could, as (SXM) suggested, be attributed to the fact fewer wards had more than one candidate and (SXM) felt there should be a review of how the STV rules work. He thought an argument could be made that you can reflect someone's intention by giving a fraction of a vote. In the case of three crosses, 0.333 recurring could be given to each of the candidates. He also raised the issue of alphabetic bias and possible alternatives. Scottish Government update Maria McCann

(MMcC) had issued a written update to the panel and had nothing further to add but was happy to respond to any questions. Scotland Office / Cabinet Office update Hannah Standring (HS) indicated that a short written update had been submitted to the Panel, advised all that the Elections Bill was now an Act and offered to respond to any questions on the update. Scottish Boundary Commission update Isabel Drummond-Murray (ID-M) updated the Panel that Boundary Scotland was preparing for a Scottish Parliament review in the autumn. Royal Mail update Rachel Winham would provide a written update when she returned from annual leave. EMB Update on electoral registration and electoral administration (PW) said that EROs were now booking slots in July and August for the annual canvass and working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the implementation of voter ID for UK Parliament elections. (CH) said the EMB was looking at the consequences of the Elections Act and would participate in discussions regarding the implementation of the Acts provisions. Electoral Commission update (AON) asked parties to remind candidates that the spending returns were due on 10 June and advice surgery time slots were available for booking. Shaun McNally, the Commission's new Chief Executive, had now been in post since the last meeting and hoped to attend a future meeting of the SP PPP. Dates of future meetings (SXM) said the parties had discussed and would prefer a hybrid meeting going forward. (AON) said he would investigate how to provide that but if it was not possible, it would remain in a virtual format. He would suggest dates and circulate for approval.