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On this page Preparations and considerations for May 2021 Imprints Consultation

Minutes of the last meeting Commission Update Report AOB First published: 18 June

2021 Last updated: 18 June 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Labour

Party: Andrew Whyte (AW), chair of meeting Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM)

Conservative Party: Catherine Latham (CL) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Liberal

Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of

Communications, Policy & Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE)

Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance (AI) Clara Cole, Head

of Regulatory Support (CC) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM) Cabinet Office:

Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) Tom McGee (TM) Chris Watts (CWA) Preparations and

considerations for May 2021 AW welcomed CL to her first meeting. He invited PD to

give an overview of the stakeholder workshops held by the Cabinet Office to

understand processes and consider key issues for the May 2021 elections. He explained

the workshops were productive and allowed for in depth discussions with suppliers and

organisations to establish what may be possible within the existing legislative

framework. He noted the need for arrangements to ensure the elections are run safely

and effectively, and gave the examples of social distancing measures and the need for

absent voting options for those who wouldn't be able to attend polling stations. He

highlighted the four nation approach to the ongoing work. AI provided an overview of

the work underway to prepare for the May elections. She noted the recent Electoral

Coordination and Advisory Board (ECAB) meeting to discuss the upcoming plans to

ensure the polls can be delivered safely and effectively. She highlighted the support

and guidance the Commission will continue to provide to electoral administrators and

explained the topics the guidance will cover. AI explained the Commission was in the

process of establishing a set of objectives for delivering successful elections in

the current public health environment. She noted the objectives would be used to

assess any proposed policy changes, identify and manage risks, and to evaluate the

success of the elections. AW welcomed the objectives and asked if they would be

consulted on. AI explained consultation would happen imminently and welcomed input

from members. LE introduced CC as the new Head of Regulatory Support at the

Commission. CC noted her focus was to provide helpful support to parties and

candidates, and explained parties could expect upcoming guidance on; the legislative

changes relating to expenditure, as a result of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act

2018; and highlighted the plans to integrate the substance of the Commission's Codes

of Practice into guidance for the May 2021 elections. AW raised the issue of postal

voting and explained the need to consider voters who need to shield or have

circumstances that prevent them from attending a polling station. He asked if the

Commission had any plans on postal voting, specifically. AI noted the ongoing work

with the sector to understand capacity of key suppliers and the system. She

highlighted the request the Commission had received in July from Scottish Government

to carry out of public opinion work in Scotland to understand attitudes towards

voting in the context of Covid- 19. She noted the finding that most voters are keen

to continue voting in-person despite the public health challenges. She explained the

resources the Commission had already for local authorities to share with their

residents, highlighting that: polling stations will be safe places to vote; there are

a range of voting options; and those who would prefer to vote by post should apply

early. KB asked about the implications of local lockdowns on the declaration process

and if it would be possible for poll cards to contain advice to voters on how to stay

safe. She noted there could be challenges doing so, given the different elections taking place in Scotland and Wales. PD noted that for polling cards, due to space and the criteria in law, any additional safety information would need to be in an accompanying letter. PD explained the conversations with electoral administrators on the declaration of results, including in local lockdown areas, had concluded this would be possible and feasible with adequate support and guidance. PD explained the important role emergency proxy votes could play if a person is required to isolate on polling day, and noted the proposal was being considered and details worked through. AI noted local authorities would shortly be carrying out a review of polling stations, exploring factors such as size and capacity for adequate social distancing, as well as venues ability and willingness to close for polling day. Imprints Consultation CWA gave an overview of the digital imprints proposals for online political campaigning. He noted the complexity of the issues, and welcomed input to the consultation from members and parties by the 4 November. He highlighted the scope of the regime and distinction between paid for and non- paid for content. He noted the inclusion of a question in the consultation on whether the regime should be expanded to cover wider forms of online political advertising. He welcomed any questions from the members. BC noted the need to balance the proposals being robust, but also practicable and deliverable. CL asked what is defined as 'practical' on where you can put an imprint. CWA explained if an image was detachable would expect an imprint. He noted the feedback from social media companies had been that imprints could potentially impose costs on them depending on the requirements. CWA explained more generally, the need for transparency was paramount, but it was important requirements were not burdensome. GD welcomed the consultation, noting he would respond. He raised the issue of imprints and use of PO Box addresses. He noted the need to consider the number of candidates who would not have an office address to use, and asked about the use of the Head Office address of the relevant party, rather than a PO Box. CWA noted previous discussions with the Commission on addresses in the context of the debate on intimidation of candidates. He highlighted the difficulties with PO Boxes, and the being able to legally serve papers on someone at a PO Box, specifically for the Commission in duties to enforce spending rules. CWA explained that party headquarter addresses could be used, if there was no local head office. He agreed to take this away and consider in greater detail. SM highlighted how the name and address of printers on leaflets can support transparency with the audit trail, and noted the debate of online imprints had different considerations of how could ensure transparency. He welcomed the consultation and highlighted the need to consider the workability of the proposals, specifically noting the need for flexibility in legislation and guidance to ensure imprint requirements are practicable and fit for the future. He noted the lessons learnt from introduction of an imprint requirement at the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum and the current consultation by Scottish Government on imprints to cover paid and unpaid material by registered and unregistered campaigners. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 1/09/2020) The Minutes were agreed. LE updated on the publication of guidance for online party conferences and events. She noted the FAQ page on the Commission's website that explained how these events interact with PPERA party funding rules. She confirmed for digital conferences this year, the non- donation level which would apply would be the fair market rate available for a stand. SM raised an issue relating to the action on the candidate spending tool. He noted the minutes did not reflect the range of points he raised, as his concerns did not related only to the filter. LE explained there was no plan to revisit the tool. LM

agreed to update the minutes. BP updated on the forthcoming meeting with the parties to discuss the Commission's next five year Corporate Plan and explained this was a welcome opportunity to get parties input. AW asked for a substantive paper to be circulated in advance, which BP agreed to. BP updated on upcoming changes to Commission board, notably the end of Sir John Holmes term as Chair of the Commission on 31 December 2020. LE agreed to follow up the ongoing action on how the case update could be distributed routinely by email to a parties distribution list. Commission Update Report There was no discussion or questions asked on the paper. AW raised the background paper from the Cabinet Office on the Coronavirus SI, and confirmed there was no further questions from parties. Any other business SM raised the publication of the spending returns from the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election. LE explained that owing to Covid-19 not all parties and campaigners were able to deliver returns by the deadline, so publication would be in batches. SM asked about the time taken for the Commission to upload and publish the returns. LE noted the duty on the Commission to publish the returns as soon as practicable once they have been received. TM highlighted the three areas where the Cabinet Office would seek input from parties in the coming weeks: on the campaign finance framework; on the campaign spending limits and on notional spending. The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 1 December 2020. Commission actions Status To use the a meeting to discuss the Commission's next five year corporate plan with parties Ongoing: Craig to provide update at meeting on revised timetable To consider how the case update could be distributed routinely by email to a parties distribution list. Ongoing: Louise to update at meeting on arrangements to provide update To update paragraph 5.1 in previous minutes to reflect wider points on candidate spending tool from SM. Complete Cabinet Office actions Status To consider use of party headquarters addresses on imprints Ongoing Related content Party panels Find out about the different party panels, and read the minutes of past meetings Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 2 June 2020 Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 3 February 2020 Party registration decisions View our decisions on political party names, descriptions and emblems

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On this page RNIB - Turned Out report DCMS consultation on data protection – DCMS/Cabinet Office Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 7/9/2021) Political Finance Online project Commission guidance and query on advice consistency Electoral Commission update report AOB First published: 4 February 2022 Last updated: 9 February 2022 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB), chair of meeting Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Conservative Party: Catherine Latham (CL) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Carl Harris (CH) Alba Party: Chris McEleny (CM) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer (AMW) Cabinet Office: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) Elizabeth Jacobs (EJ) Present for agenda item 1: RNIB: Amy Craddock (AC) Present for agenda item 2: Electoral Commission: Kate Engles (KE), Policy Manager Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport: Robin Edwards (RE) Sarah Goulsbra (SG) Bilal Toure (BT) Simon Weakley (SM) Mark Hicks (MH) Cabinet Office: Elizabeth Homans (EH) Rose Ashley (RA) Apologies: Alan Mabbutt (Conservative Party) RNIB - Turned Out report AC gave an overview of RNIB's Turned Out report, noting recommendations on the accessibility of information provided to voters by political parties at elections. She explained that blind and partially sighted voters may not be able to fully participate in elections if they cannot access information about policies and candidates, and that there are implications in their ability to vote independently if they need to rely on others to tell them about their voting options. AC suggested that parties should prioritise providing information in an accessible format, such as large print, braille or audio versions of manifestos and candidate information, and also highlighted that RNIB provided a braille transcription service. She noted the report's conclusion that failure to provide information in an accessible format could be a breach of the Equality Act. AC also explained that access to information from parties is only one area of concern and that information provided by local authorities is also often not accessible. She also highlighted the importance of an audio and tactile option at polling stations. KB asked how much the RNIB's braille transcription cost and what the turnaround times were, noting the short period of time parties often have to produce election material. AC explained this was free service for individuals but suggested organisations should get in touch for further information. CW thanked AC for her presentation, and asked the parties whether it would be helpful for the Commission to distil best practice to be shared with those party staff who were responsible for this area of work. GD suggested it would be helpful to have clarity on what parties are legally required to provide and in what format. LE noted that the Commission would, if the parties indicated it would be helpful, look at what it could do to encourage best practice from the point of view of supporting improvements to the democratic process, rather than this being an electoral law obligation. SM asked whether work was being done on making ballot papers easier to fill out for those with accessibility requirements. AC explained RNIB have been working with Cabinet Office on this, and PD confirmed they had further meetings planned with accessibility partners. DCMS consultation on data protection – DCMS/Cabinet Office RE gave an overview of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport consultation on data protection, which includes proposals around the use of personal data by political parties. He noted that the department was seeking views on whether existing data protection laws needed clarifying, and asked whether the parties had any feedback. KB

noted that the parties had not been contacted about the consultation until few days before the consultation closed in November. CL noted that the Conservative Party's data protection team would have been in touch directly. RE apologised that the parties had not been informed, and noted that they could continue to share views via email after the meeting. CH asked if there was a timetable for any legislative change, noting that the party was currently working to update their processes in line with ICO guidance but that they would need to take into account any changes prompted by the consultation. RE explained that responses were being worked through, with any recommendations put to Ministers in the New Year. He noted any legislative changes would be after summer 2022, and would also require an implementation period. SM asked whether any changes would take account of the EU's e-privacy directive, if political messaging would be covered in future legislation, and there had been consideration given to a soft opt-out option to political marketing. SG confirmed the consultation document covered these issues. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 7/9/2021) Regarding the actions, KB noted that she was still to arrange a meeting with the NPCC. The minutes were agreed. Elections Bill - Cabinet Office BC gave an update on the Bill's progress through Parliament. She noted that the Bill had been amended to include provisions relating to the use of first past the post for PCC elections and mayoral elections in England, as well as some minor technical drafting amendments. BC also highlighted that ministerial responsibility for elections policy had now transferred from Cabinet Office to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and that Kemi Badenoch MP was taking the Bill through the Commons. BC confirmed that the UK Government was still working towards the Bill receiving Royal Assent around May. Political Finance Online project CM asked for an update on the launch of Political Finance Online and plans to provide training, as at the last PPP meeting it was noted that the system would launch in January. KB noted that the Liberal Democrats, among other parties, had been given a first look at the system and been informed that the launch would take place further into 2022. LE reminded members of the difficulties the Commission had had with the external developer, and that bringing delivery in house had meant greater control over the project's development. She noted that technical issues had, however, slowed recent development which, while now resolved, meant the new system would not launch in January as planned. She confirmed the Commission would provide an updated timetable for launch, with a phased launch proposed for early 2022. LE acknowledged the parties' previous feedback on being kept up to date on the launch and future development updates. She said the Commission was looking at different training opportunities, both ahead of launch and also on a long-term basis, including the use of online training and videos. CM asked that the Commission avoid launching around the elections in Scotland and Wales in May 2022, and KB also highlighted the busy April period. LE noted this would be taken into account. CH asked whether a dummy 'sandbox' site would be available for the parties to use for testing. LE confirmed this would not be available for launch but that the Commission is considering it for longer term development. SM asked whether all existing data would be moved from the existing system, and whether it would be cleaned up to avoid duplication. LE explained that the level of data migration was still to be determined, and the Commission was considering whether any data needed to be deposited with the National Archives. She confirmed existing data would be cleaned, and that the new system would make it harder to duplicate entries. Commission guidance and query on advice consistency CL explained that the Conservative Party had received emails from the Commission about the party over-reporting aggregated donations, and that the Commission's advice had differed from

the party's interpretation of PPERA in relation to reporting thresholds for central parties and accounting units. KB also said the Liberal Democrats had been investigated for over-reporting aggregated donations. LE confirmed there had been no change in our interpretation of the reporting threshold but that she would raise with colleagues. CL also noted that some guidance was missing from the Commission's website. LE suggested this may be where guidance had been transferred to the new HTML format, but that if there were any specific pieces of guidance missing she would look into it. SM asked for the timetable for the completion of the guidance project. LE confirmed she would follow up on this. KB asked how quickly guidance relating to the Elections Bill would be provided, given the need to train volunteers and staff ahead of the next general election. LE said the Commission continued to recommend that the UK Government should consider the impact of the measures on all those involved in elections when planning for implementation. She added that the Commission was currently working through implementation guidance with Cabinet Office, and would ensure parties are kept up to date. BC agreed with this, noting that the Cabinet Office was thinking about how to support all those involved in elections. She suggested she could provide a further update on the timeline for implementation at the next PPP meeting in February. Electoral Commission update report The update report was noted. SM asked whether an online spending tool for the Scottish Parliament and Senedd election spending returns would be available. LE confirmed this would likely be in an Excel format, but that the data would be able to be filtered for usability. AOB PD confirmed that the provision to allow emergency proxy votes for Covid would be continued into and beyond the May 2022 elections, as government guidance on self-isolation remains in place. PD also confirmed that the changes introduced for the May 2021 elections relating to the number of subscribers required for nominations would not be carried forward to future elections. GD noted the changes to nominations for PCC had made it an easier process, and asked whether any research had been done on keeping this in place for PCC elections. PD noted that any permanent changes would need proper consideration, and that the changes made for May 2021 had been solely focused on meeting public health guidance to cut unnecessary contact and travel. SM asked whether the next meeting of the PPP would be held virtually. CW confirmed it would be. Commission actions Status Provide update on timetable for completion of the guidance project. Cabinet Office actions Status Provide a further update on the timeline for Election Bill implementation at the next PPP meeting.

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On this page Update on preparations and considerations for May 2021 Update on Political Finance Online Publication of General Election spending returns Digital imprints Electoral Commission guidance Review of legal maximums Nomination process in light of COVID-19 Minutes of the last meeting Commission Update Report AOB First published: 18 June 2021 Last updated: 18 June 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB), chair of meeting Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Conservative Party: Catherine Latham (CL) Alan Mabutt OBE (AM) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy & Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer (AMW) Cabinet Office: Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Thomas Collie (TC) Elizabeth Parckar (EP) Liz Homans (LH) Update on preparations and considerations for May 2021 CW provided an overview of recent Commission activity, including the finalisation and publication of the shared set of objectives for delivering well run elections in the current public health environment. He noted the Commission's to publishing updated guidance for electoral administrators, with generic poll-related guidance already available and Covid-specific updates being published in sections, with guidance specifically on polling stations to be published shortly. CW provided an update on the public opinion research, commissioned by the Scottish Government in August and then in November, to understand the impact the pandemic is having on public attitudes to voting. He noted the consistent findings in both surveys. CW also provided an update on the range of Commission's communication resources that are now available for local authorities to use ahead of May 2021. He noted that the Commission would, from January, undertake additional public awareness communications to ensure voters had the necessary information to be able to vote with on 6 May. LE explained the Commission's guidance for parties and campaigners would be published in the coming weeks, with a 'change log' highlighting to users could more the parts that had been updated. LE encouraged parties to provide feedback or contact the Commission with any regulatory questions or issues in the run up to May 2021. She explained the usual advice service would be available, and individual sessions could be arranged with parties to discuss the guidance. She noted the Commission would be launching a live FAQ page for questions from parties and campaigners, but noted the questions would be general to ensure there would be no breach of confidentiality. She highlighted the Commission's upcoming a survey of parties and campaigners that would be issued later this week. LE provided an update on the enforcement approach ahead of the May 2021 elections, noting the Commission would take a similar proportionate approach to that at the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election. LE explained this would involve the Commission speaking to parties first, where an issue has arisen, to find a way to resolve matters proportionately and appropriately, where possible without the need for formal enforcement. KB raised the recent local government by-elections in Scotland and asked if the Commission had any feedback from how these were delivered. CW explained that colleagues were currently gathering information on the by-elections, and that more broadly, the Commission has been monitoring comparable elections taking place in other countries to see what may be learnt. KB asked if there would be an increase in the number of polling stations needed for the elections, and if this would impact on the number of staff required for venues. KB raised concerns this could be difficult where election volunteers were older. CW agreed to this away, but explained that the

number of polling stations was likely to be a decision taken locally. GD highlighted the link on Commission's website to a generic timetable for the Senedd elections appeared to be broken. LE agreed to take this away and check. SM raised postal voting, highlighting that in the Kincorth/Nigg/Cove by-election on 5 November 2020, the number of postal votes was very low. He suggested postal voting may have plateaued, particularly where due to the pandemic fewer people were able to travel and so would may no longer be away on polling day. CW noted that the survey only represents a snapshot of opinion and reiterated that the Commission's messaging would continue to focus on the safety of in-person voting. He explained that the Commission is currently working with charities and NGOs on ensuring absent voting messaging reached vulnerable groups. KB asked if there would be disposable face masks available at polling stations. BC explained that disposable face masks at polling stations was being considered and noted the Cabinet Office was in discussion with the Department for Health and Social Care on public health regulations and the impact on polling stations. Update on Political Finance Online LE provided an update on the timetable for the launch of the system. She explained that it would no longer be possible to implement from January 2021, owing to supplier issues that were out of the control of the Commission. She noted the final stages of development would be brought in-house, and the new system launched in September 2021. LE noted the Commission would want to come back to the parties nearer the time to talk about implementation, and explained the training would be available over the summer for parties KB asked if there would be a cap on the number of training places. LE explained that, as the Commission wanted everyone to be comfortable with the new system, training sessions would be available on an ongoing basis. Publication of General Election spending returns CL asked for an update on when the final spending returns from political parties would be published. LE explained that there were a small number of returns still due to be published and that one batch would be published before Christmas, and possibly a smaller batch after Christmas, if necessary. AM raised concerns about coming to the end of the legal timetable to compare candidate spending with party returns. LE explained that the Commission was publishing returns as quickly as possible after receiving them, having been accommodating of party circumstances owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital imprints SM raised the digital imprints changes in Scotland, using the example of an MSP tweeting about the Scottish Parliament elections and asked what the tweet would need to include. LE explained it would need to include an imprint, either on the face of the material or strongly linked to the tweet, and noted that the Commission's guidance on imprints would be published very shortly. There was a discussion on how this would be enforced. KB asked if the guidance would be shared with national parties. LE confirmed it would be. LE added that the Commission was happy to run a session on the guidance for individual parties. KB noted that her concerns there may not be enough time to do before the changes come into effect. AM noted he appreciated the Commission had not introduced the change, but raised similar concerns about enforcement of material published outside of Scotland. LE explained that the Commission recommends legislative changes are place 6 months before implementation so parties and campaigners can have sufficient time. She noted the Commission would report on regulating this requirement at the elections. KB asked if the changes in Scotland would impact on UK Government's recent consultation on digital imprints. JH thanked the parties for their responses to the consultation and confirmed the UK Government would observe and learn from the changes in Scotland. He provided an update on the consultation, noting the Cabinet Office was currently working through responses, of which 98% were supportive. He

explained the Government's response would be published in the New Year. Electoral Commission guidance KB explained that some of the Commission's guidance on the website seemed to be missing, and parties needed it to prepare internal guidance. AW added that, in particular, guidance on national spending in Scottish and Welsh elections was missing, and asked for assurance it would be published in advance of the regulated period beginning 1 January 2021. LE explained most guidance would be issued within the next two weeks, and agreed to speak to colleagues and provide an update. SM asked if guidance and other content could be provided as PDFs on the Commission's website. CW explained that there were issues with PDFs which now fell outside legal accessibility requirements, but that there was a 'print to PDF' function for each page. Review of legal maximums TC provided an update on the UK Government's intention to raise the spending limit for candidates at local elections in England ahead of May 2021. He explained the limit would be increased by the rate of inflation (using the CPI rate of inflation), and that a Written Ministerial Statement would be published on Thursday 3 December. He noted the statement would include reference to a review of spending limits for other reserved elections after May 2021. Nomination process in light of COVID-19 KB asked for an update on any possible changes to the nomination process in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. BC confirmed this was part of the Cabinet Office's work with the Department for Health and Social Care on exemptions for elections as essential work. BC added that there was currently work being done to create scope for pre-checking to happen electronically, but the requirement would still require nomination papers to be handed in in person. KB raised concerns that election agents were often older, and therefore potentially more vulnerable to COVID-19 and shielding restrictions. She asked about the impact of local lockdowns or tiers and what would happen if restrictions meant someone couldn't travel to another tier in order to visit an election office. BC explained the Cabinet Office was working with the Welsh and Scottish Governments on an exemption for cross-border travel for election purposes, but noted that questions about which staff were best placed to carry out tasks would be for parties to address. KB asked if party volunteers, not just employed staff, would be covered by the exemptions, and if the exemptions would cover the whole election period. BC confirmed volunteers would be included in the exemptions, and that exemptions would cover the whole election period. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 1/09/2020) The Minutes were agreed. Regarding the Commission's intention to organise a session on its Corporate Plan with an expanded PPP, CW noted that this would be deferred to late summer or early autumn of 2021 owing to the likely revised timetable for the development and submission of the corporate plan. LE provided an update on how case updates could be disturbed to parties. She noted the Commission no longer provided these updates, but confirmed that she would put the parties in contact with the NPCC, who are happy to discuss further. KB indicated she would be happy to be the point of contact. KB asked for an update from the Cabinet Office on their consideration of the use of party headquarters addresses on imprints. JH confirmed this was still under consideration, and that Cabinet Office hoped to have an update soon. SM raised that it may not be appropriate for addresses of taxpayer-funded constituency offices to be used on imprints. JH explained there was a balance between ensuring transparency for voters and the need for accuracy to ensure meaningful enforcement where necessary. Commission Update Report There was no discussion and no questions asked on the paper. Any other business AW asked about the Cabinet Office looking to introduce an online system for applying for absent voting. BC confirmed the Cabinet Office was looking at this, but it may not be deliverable in

time for the May 2021 elections AW asked when the decision would be made on its introduction before May, and BC confirmed the latest a decision could be made would be mid-February, but that Cabinet Office hoped a decision could be taken sooner. AW also asked if more could be done to encourage electoral administrators to accept scanned copies of applications for postal votes. BC confirmed she would discuss with colleagues, but noted the system was largely designed for paper forms and ink signatures. AW asked about the letter from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution regarding proposals on notional spending, and invited an open discussion. He noted the Labour Party wanted to see section 75 enforced properly and would be responding to the letter in due course. AM agreed. EP invited LH to provide an update on the use of the electoral register by parties. LH explained that work on this was now resuming after delays caused by the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election and the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained a statutory instrument would update wording in legislation to reflect data protection needs, and provide clarity for EROs on providing historic data to assess the permissibility of donors. LH highlighted that the plan was for changes to be made for UK parliamentary general elections, and local elections in England and Northern Ireland in the Spring. Changes for Wales and Scotland would come into effect in Autumn. She noted this would ensure changes were in place 6 months before the 2022 elections. LH offered to continue discussion outside of the PPP if of interest. The sequencing of chairs for future meetings was confirmed as: February (Conservatives), June (SNP), September (Labour), December (Liberal Democrats). The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 1 February 2021. Related content Party panels Find out about the different party panels, and read the minutes of past meetings Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 1 September 2020 Electoral Commission Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 2 June 2020 Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 3 February 2020

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arising (PPP 2/2/2021) Commission update report AOB First published: 14 September
2021 Last updated: 14 September 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting
Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM), chair of meeting Conservative Party: Alan
Mabbutt OBE (AM) Catherine Latham (CL) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Labour
Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Alba Party: Chris McEleny (CM) Electoral Commission: Ailsa
Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance (AI) Craig Westwood,
Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs
Manager (LM) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer (AMW) Cabinet Office: James
Hairsnape (JH) Guy Daws (GD) Introductions SM welcomed CM to his first PPP meeting.
SM asked whether the Cabinet Office had any papers to circulate to the PPP members
regarding the upcoming UK Government legislation, as it had done for the Scottish
PPP. JH noted he would give an update on the forthcoming Electoral Integrity Bill,
and proposed changes to notional spending, under AOB. Post-election review – May 2021
elections Guidance SM asked when all the Commission's guidance would be moving to the
new format. AI explained that this had now been completed for guidance for Electoral
Registration Officers, and guidance for parties, campaigners and candidates, as well
as Returning Officers, would follow from next summer ahead of the May 2023 elections.
CL requested that when the Commission issues new guidance under the new format, old
versions are left on the website for reference until the new format is complete. SM
asked if users would be alerted to guidance changes under the new format. AI
explained guidance pages would show when they were last updated. She undertook to
discuss with regulation colleagues how the Commission could update parties on
guidance changes as it currently does through its electoral administrator bulletin.
SM noted there had previously been issues with version control, highlighting guidance
on commonly used names in Scotland as an example. AI explained the Commission has
quality assurance processes in place, but noted that one of the benefits of the new
guidance format would be that it will make version control easier. Nominations SM
said that pre-checking nominations by email was helpful and should be retained for
future elections. CM agreed, but suggested moving to an all-electronic system for
handing in nominations in future. AW agreed with the importance of not losing some of
the Covid-secure changes which worked well in the recent elections, including pre-
checks for nominations. He noted there had been frustration with some Returning
Officers not taking BACS transfers for deposits. Absent voting KB and AW both noted
problems with some local authorities which had been affected by issues with third-
party printers, resulting in delays to the despatch of some postal votes. AI
explained the Commission was picking this up with local authorities as part of its
post-poll work, but noted that affected Returning Officers had made efforts to
mitigate the impact. GD noted the Cabinet Office was also looking at this issue. SM
explained the Scottish PPP had discussed whether absent voter files could be supplied
earlier or by a set date as some local authorities delayed providing the files in
case of cancellations. He also suggested the possibility of allowing postal voters to
cancel their postal vote and apply for an emergency proxy, should they find
themselves away from their home and unable to hand in a postal vote in time.
Campaigning and polling day KB noted there had been problems with polling agents not
being given access to polling stations in a couple of areas. CM highlighted that it
had been hard for campaigners to override wider public health guidance, where
campaigning guidance was more permissive, suggesting that for any future elections

under Covid restrictions, guidance on campaigning should set out a clear number of campaigners allowed in a group. Verification and count AM explained that generally, Returning Officers had allowed good access to counts, but it took negotiations in some situations, while in others there were insufficient people to observe counts fully, and noted the importance of candidates and agents having visibility of the process. AM also raised the forthcoming Chesham and Amersham by-election, suggesting allowing access to counting agents should be a priority over any press access. KB agreed and noted the Liberal Democrats had been told they could only have three people at the by-election count. AW agreed that most ROs had been helpful, but some appeared to have used Covid restrictions to make things harder for parties and candidates, and that it would be helpful to make clear that these elections were unique given the circumstances, and that access should be allowed as normal in future. SM also suggested updating RO guidance to allow more counting agents to be appointed than expected, in case an allocation isn't taken up. He noted this was particularly important for list elections, where not all candidates take up their allocation. KB noted there was an issue with consistency across count venues, with some requiring lateral flow Covid tests, and others not, despite being in the same region, which made it difficult to brief activists. CM also noted inconsistency across venues, with the example of mobile phone use being allowed at some counts but not others. AI thanked the parties for their feedback on the May elections, explaining it would be helpful for the Commission's post-poll reporting work and also in highlighting areas for consideration in relation to future guidance updates. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 2/2/2021) KB said she had not heard back from NPCC regarding a request to meet with the parties, and would follow this up. On the Commission's actions relating to guidance on ROs accepting bank transfers, AI explained the guidance had been updated, but noted it would be helpful to hear examples of which ROs could be encouraged further, which AW agreed to provide. AI explained the majority of guidance updates are highlighted in the Commission's EA Bulletin, and the bank transfer guidance was included in the supplementary guidance on Covid-secure elections which the Commission drew attention to. SM requested a correction to the minutes regarding line 4.1 on Political Finance Online, and also asked for an update on the project including whether there was an opportunity to input further to the development of the spending and reporting side of the project. CW said the Commission had been in touch regarding training, but agreed to provide more detail on development. The minutes were agreed. Commission update report CW explained the report was relatively short this month as most of the Commission's focus has been on May's elections. He noted John Pullinger, who has now been appointed as Commission Chair, is keen to engage with the parties. There was a brief discussion on the publication of spending returns. SM asked if the Commission would publish a spending tool for the recent elections as it had for the 2019 UK Parliamentary general election. AM asked when the Commission would be finished with publishing the 2019 UKPGE returns, and SM asked if the Commission would publish a report on spending. CW agreed to follow up in writing after the meeting. AOB Notional spending JH provided an overview of the UK Government's Electoral Integrity Bill, and noted that the Cabinet Office had recently written to parties on two aspects of the legislation relating to notional spending and digital imprints. He also noted that reforms to undue influence, and extending electoral sanctions to cover intimidation, would be of interest to the parties. AM explained he had not seen the letter from the Cabinet Office relating to notional spending, and had only seen a similar letter which had been sent to the Scottish PPP members. He set out his concerns with that

letter, in particular how it appeared to change the interpretation of what spending should be reported under section 75 of the Representation of the People Act, and the impact this could have on volunteers. He explained it was important to make returns as easy as possible. JH set out the UK Government's objective to make sure candidates and agents understand the law, so it is easier for them to comply, and explained the letter should have been sent to the parties on 7 May. He noted the need to clarify spending under section 90C and section 75, as a lot of activity which should be reported under section 75 is currently reported under section 90C. He explained the UK Government aimed to make changes to section 90C to provide reassurance and communicate how reporting requirements under that provision are distinct from section 75 reporting. JH explained the Cabinet Office would be working with the Commission on these changes to ensure clarity. AM explained that most parties avoided spending under section 75 as once they give a third-party that power, the political party lost control of the spending returns but would still be legally responsible for it. He reiterated concerns about the changes being communicated to the parties after a large set of elections where most people would have been acting under the previous interpretation. KB raised concerns about losing volunteer agents if the proposed changes are not clear, and that there is an urgency about introducing the changes if the parties are to train activists in time for the next general election. JH explained the whole objective is to make spending requirements clear, and that Cabinet Office expects to work with the Commission on near-term guidance, and will collaborate with parties before the Bill becomes law. He noted the Cabinet Office is mindful that the parties need guidance in advance. SM noted the need to not rely too much on guidance at the expense of clear and workable legislation. JH agreed to bring parties together for a separate meeting, and to recirculate the letter of 7 May.

Codes of Practice and digital imprints SM asked whether Codes of Practice spending categories would be picked up in the forthcoming legislation. JH noted the Cabinet Office was aware of concerns, but this would not be in the Bill as the plan is to allow for reworking of the Codes in light of changes brought forward by the Bill before putting them on a statutory footing. SM asked if there would be further consultation with the parties; JH said he expected there would be if there were major changes, but would need to confirm this. JH raised the introduction of digital imprints, explaining the proposed definitions and which content would be covered. SM asked if there was much difference with the digital imprints regime in Scotland; JH confirmed there are broad similarities but that there are some key differences between how the two regimes have been constructed. For example, the current version used in Scotland uses the concept of a personal opinion exception whereas the UKG version does not, the UKG proposal includes a broader definition of material for paid-for political advertising, and there are differences in terms of enforcement powers, amongst others.

Next meeting SM asked the Commission if any consideration had been given to inviting Commissioners and party treasurers to future PPP meetings. CW said that the Commission is giving ongoing consideration of where best to fit this into the meeting schedule. The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 7 September 2021.

Commission actions

Status To provide the following updates on Regulation work: The development of the spending elements of Political Finance Online 2019 UKPGE spending returns, including whether the Commission intends to publish a report. Confirm whether the Commission will publish a spending tool for the 2021 elections. Complete To consider how the Commission can update parties on future guidance changes as it currently does with EA bulletins. Cabinet Office actions

Status To arrange a follow-up meeting on notional expenditure

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On this page Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/9/2022) Elections Act – DLUHC Political Finance Online Contingency planning for the King's Coronation Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising Any other business First published: 16 February 2023 Last updated: 16 February 2023 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW), chair of meeting Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM) Jonathan Burkitt (JB) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Alba Party: Chris McEleny (CM) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/9/2022) CM noted his apologies were not listed on the minutes; GD noted a correction on his name. The minutes were approved as corrected. KB noted that the police continued to suggest the Electoral Commission should arrange any meeting between them and the parties. LE said she would remind the NPCC that the Commission remained of the view that its permission was not required for the police and the parties to speak to each other. She noted a new NPCC electoral lead was expected soon. AW suggested the parties would be happy to look at alternative formats for any meeting. AW asked for an update on a roundtable on leaders' tours. LE said that these were not an immediate priority for the Commission, as they had never been a point of controversy or enforcement. However, she noted that any engagement would be more useful nearer to a relevant election, when she would be keen to get a sense of what concerns the parties had on the issue. KB suggested it was party leaders' offices who were asking for clarity on what they could and could not do at an election with a leader's tour. AM added that some uncertainty might have arisen from turnover in leader's office staff, who would want reassurance from the Commission so that they did not make any mistakes. LE explained the Commission's regulatory support offer existed to answer queries such as this, but that she would take it away and consider moving it up the Commission's priorities as per the PPP's feedback. SM asked whether the Commission's code of practice on spending for parties and candidates would be revisited following the Elections Act provisions coming into force. LE said that the Code had been delivered to DLUHC prior to the Elections Act's introduction, but not laid. The Commission has produced guidance reflecting its contents, and guidance on new Elections Act measures. However, revisiting the Code was not currently in the Commission's plans due to other priorities and limited resources. There were no plans to present a new Code to the Minister. Elections Act – DLUHC BC provided an update on the Elections Act, noting an implementation timetable had been shared with the PPP. She explained the accessibility statutory instruments were being signed this week, and measures on expenditure had come into force in November. Parliamentary debates on the voter ID SIs are planned for next week. AW asked for clarification on the dates for voter ID, checking whether it was correct that the voter authority certificate application process goes live on 16 January, and the requirement comes into force for elections (except UK parliamentary general elections) after 3 May. BC confirmed this, explaining the application process going live ahead of the voter ID requirement itself would allow people to prepare. PD confirmed the voter ID requirement would apply after 3 May for parliamentary by-elections. KB asked when parties would be able to see the forms for applying for a voter authority certificate, and whether it would be similar to postal vote forms in

being uniform across local authorities. PD said the content is prescribed in legislation, but the form design was not. AI added that the Commission had designed a form, but had not been able to user test it owing to delays to secondary legislation. She offered to share a draft form with the PPP, when available. KB asked whether there were enough women staffing polling stations to allow for voters wearing face coverings to remove them for ID checks in a respectful way. BC explained DLUHC had been speaking to local authorities about this, and had a mixed response in terms of their levels of concern. With this in mind, the government had funded privacy screens and extra staff, and would let local authorities decide the best approach for their communities. KB asked what guidance would be available to polling station staff on checking ID, noting there was no limit on expired ID being used and that this risked a different approach across polling stations. BC confirmed that expired ID still needed to look like the voter presenting it, and that while there was some subjectivity involved in checking ID, the policy intent was one of taking a reasonable approach. She noted the presiding officer would have the final decision over any ID disputes. PD added that the presiding officer can ask a list of statutory questions about a voter's identity, and that it would be an offence to lie in response. KB raised whether there will be a deadline to return forms for a voter authority certificate, and what the expected turnaround times are for applications. BC said the deadline was at 5pm, 6 working days before polling day. She also noted that there is the option of a temporary certificate being printed if the original does not arrive, and voters can apply for an emergency proxy vote in certain prescribed circumstances. She added that the intention is for certificates to go out within one working day of the application being processed. PD explained the aim is that people do not wait until close to the deadline to apply for a voter authority certificate, which is what the communications work was focused on. KB noted the risk of further postal strikes and asked whether any thought had gone into mitigating their impact on this process, and that of postal ballots. BC explained Royal Mail prioritises electoral mail, and that DLUHC was in contact with them ahead of elections. PD noted Royal Mail have contingency plans for strike action. CM asked about public awareness work on voter ID, in particular the accepted forms of ID. AI gave an overview of the Commission's public awareness work, saying this would begin in January with an awareness-raising phase, followed by more targeted messaging in March in those areas with scheduled elections. CM raised the risk of running a communications campaign in England-only, and a parliamentary by-election being called in Scotland or Wales, where voters will not have seen any voter ID messaging. AI offered to share more details about the campaign strategy with the PPP after the meeting. AW asked if concerns about polling station staff security had been raised, and how they would be expected to handle difficult conversations when checking ID. BC said DLUHC had discussed this with electoral administrators, and the expectation is any difficult conversations will be dealt with as they are now for non-voter ID issues. She noted there had been no significant issues in Northern Ireland, where voter ID is already in place. Political Finance Online LE gave an overview of the Commission's decision to halt work on the project, which was no longer delivering value for money. She explained that the existing PEF Online system had been upgraded to the cloud and in line with Elections Act provisions, which had addressed capacity issues, and extension of the Commission's advice service meant there would be more resilience in the current system. LE said the Commission remained committed to delivering the benefits of a new system, and that a discovery phase for a new system would take place over the next 6 months, followed by a procurement process. Previous

feedback from the parties on their user requirements will inform this process, and the Commission will confirm with parties that feedback held on record is up to date. AW indicated that the parties would prefer enough clearance either side of local elections for the launch of a new system, and that at the start of the parties' new financial year (January) would be ideal. SM asked whether the discovery phase would be the Commission re-covering what it had already captured through engagement on the original project. LE explained this was not the Commission starting again, but looking to check feedback it had received was up to date. KB explained her party had put development of its internal systems on hold while waiting for the launch of the Commission's new system. She noted launching in January 2024 would be the worst timing ahead of an expected UK Parliamentary general election. LE appreciated the difficulty the delay and halting of the project had caused parties internally, and offered to help with explaining what had happened to party colleagues. SM noted the Commission had advised that it would share with the parties the user requirements and feedback received to date, in a document. LE explained the Commission was considering the best option for this, and would be guided by the parties on their preferred format. SM was happy to receive in any format. SM asked when it had become obvious that the project was going to be halted. LE explained the decision was taken in October, following the outcome of the external review she had mentioned at the September meeting of the PPP. SM suggested that the Commission could have realised this sooner, given it had only been able to demonstrate to parties the registration aspect, not the financial reporting side of the system. LE explained the background to the external review, including that the original developers' code had failed, which prompted the review to be undertaken. There was a brief discussion on commercial sensitivity and how this limited the Commission's options for discussing with the parties at an earlier stage. CM said the decision to halt had put a strain on parties internally, particularly in training those working with the system. SM suggested parties might consider going back to paper submissions to reduce the risk of this happening in future. LE reiterated the current system was more resilient following IT upgrades, and confirmed that paper submissions were available, but not ideal as they were less efficient. GD suggested there was a credibility issue for the Commission on moving to develop a further new system, and that there was scepticism about it being delivered. He suggested there was a need for a step-by-step process and realistic timelines. LE accepted the need to rebuild credibility, and noted the plans for a comprehensive discovery phase. SM asked what upgrades had been made to the current PEF Online system to account for the Elections Act provisions. LE said it had been upgraded to account for the new party registration provisions on assets and liabilities, and non-party campaigner tiers. Contingency planning for the King's Coronation AM asked whether the Commission had any guidance on mitigating the impact of the King's Coronation on counts for the May 2023 elections, given the proximity to the Bank Holiday. AI explained the Commission was having conversations with local authorities and would send out a survey to electoral administrators in January, which would provide more data on their count plans and any concerns they had about the May elections. AI said the Commission anticipated there was likely to be more overnight counting on the Thursday. BC added that the clarity on the Bank Holiday date had allowed local authorities to plan ahead with confidence. AW asked whether there were any concerns about police being drafted to London for the coronation, and whether this would have any impact on polling station security. AI said the Commission had not yet heard any such concerns. KB raised concerns about count staffing levels. BC acknowledged this was a pressure faced by local authorities over recent years. CM

asked whether it was possible for the parties to observe on polling day. AI explained this was not usually done, and was not possible under the observers scheme which is non-party political, but that it may be possible to facilitate something through a volunteer local authority, albeit the legislation meant it was unlikely that it would be possible to access polling stations. Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising LE highlighted that the Commission would welcome feedback on the three open consultations noted in the update report. Any other business AW asked whether DLUHC had any updates on uprating spending limits, since it wrote to the PPP in September. JH confirmed there was nothing to update on, and that the decision was with the new Minister. SM asked what indices are used for uprating decisions; JH explained there are different measures but that last time, the CPI measure of inflation was used. SM raised the availability of PDFs on the Commission website, noting that the ‘print-to-PDF’ option produced a PDF of the text appearing on the webpage, rather than a standalone PDF document, which he could obtain directly from the Commission. LE explained the Commission had moved away from PDFs as they do not meet accessibility laws, and that guidance was transitioning to a new, more accessible format. SM challenged the assertion that PDF’s did not meet accessibility laws. KB asked when new nominations papers, requiring two subscribers, would be ready. AI offered to check this and follow up after the meeting. The next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 7 February 2023. Commission actions Status Raise with NPCC issue of meeting with the parties. Consider moving leaders’ tour queries up the Commission’s priorities as per the PPP’s feedback. Share draft forms for applying for voter authority certificate. Share further information on Commission’s voter ID public awareness work. Follow up on when new nominations papers would be ready. Consider how to disclose what had been captured from parties on PEF Online system replacement requirements

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On this page Update on preparations and considerations for May 2021 Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 1/12/2020) Commission Update Report AOB First published: 18 June 2021 Last updated: 18 June 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt OBE (AM), chair of meeting Catherine Latham (CL) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Electoral Commission: Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance (AI) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Bob Posner, Chief Executive (BP) Binnie Goh, Legal Counsel (BG) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM) Cabinet Office: Becca Crosier (BC) Paul Docker (PD) James Hairsnape (JH) Update on preparations and considerations for May 2021 BC provided an overview of ongoing preparations for the upcoming elections, including ensuring returning officers had the necessary support to deliver well run elections in the ever changing public health environment. She noted the UK Government's commitment to providing clarity and ensuring the polls could take place safely and effectively. She also highlighted the recent letter from the Minister for the Constitution and Devolution to parties to set out the latest position and provide advice on campaigning– that in order to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 infection, door to door campaigning would not during the national lockdown be considered an essential or necessary activity. PD also provided an update on potential changes to the nomination process. He highlighted however that changes to allow for forms to be submitted electronically required primary legislation, so would not be possible ahead of the elections. He explained that the ongoing work with the Department for Health and Social Care that focussed on ensuring any proposals for candidate nomination forms would balance the need to collect a certain number of signatures to demonstrate local support with the need to protect public health. PD explained the approach would involve considering how the proposals worked proportionately for nominations for Police and Crime Commissioner and Mayoral elections, where there are large geographical areas and electorates. AM welcomed insight on the potential changes to the nomination process and noted they seemed sensible. KB agreed but highlighted that confirmation of the process would be welcome as soon as possible. AW asked for further detail about nominations process for Police and Commissioners elections, given they are not mapped by local authority areas. PD committed to providing confirmation as soon as possible. GD suggested it would be simpler to have a set number. LE explained that the Commission would update its guidance as soon as the nominations process had been confirmed. She highlighted the Commission's live FAQ page for parties and campaigners would be updated quickly. She noted the Commission's survey of parties, candidates and campaigners had been useful in providing information from a range of parties on their plans to use leaflets and door to door campaigning, if permitted under public health guidance. AI noted all of the Commission's electoral administration guidance had been published, and would be updated to reflect any final changes to the process from the UK Government. She explained that colleagues were continuing working with local authorities to support them in ongoing preparations. She noted the findings from the Commission's recent survey of Returning Officers, and explained around a third had expressed concerns regarding staffing polling stations. AM noted that a number of polling station staff are volunteers. He asked about the possibility of changing payments to staff to be tax free in order to incentivise more volunteers. BC explained this would require a change to tax laws. PD raised tellers and observation

of the count. He highlighted the need for social distancing measures to ensure both could take place safely and provide transparency of the process. He noted Returning Officers would have to make their own decisions to ensure the count and verification could be delivered effectively while maintaining social distancing. AM noted it would be worth considering tellers being required to wear masks outside polling stations, as they would in supermarkets or other venues. KB noted that many traditional polling venues had become vaccine centres and asked if there were any provisions if polling stations could not be identified. AI noted many local authorities had been able to find suitable venues, but explained that the Commission's ongoing work would focus on supporting local authorities to ensure they had enough venues for polling day and the count. AW raised the need for clear guidance for Returning Officers to do informal checks of nomination papers remotely. AI confirmed the Commission's guidance made clear returning officers should encourage parties and campaigners to scan and email the forms for checking to reduce face to face contact. AW highlighted the potential benefits of encouraging payment of deposits by bank transfer over cash. AI agreed to make this more explicit in the Commission's guidance. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 1/12/2020) The Minutes were agreed. KB noted she had been in touch with the NPCC and would get a meeting arranged with the parties in due course. Commission Update Report There was no discussion or questions asked on the paper. Any other business SM asked for an update on PF Online and asked when parties could expect to input in the development process for uploading and publishing donations into the system so it could take into account parties processes and asked, specifically, if there would be a facility to allow accounting units to update their financial schemes. LE noted the project was still on track and training for the parties was scheduled for the summer. She agreed to take the query away on donations and to provide further detail. AM asked about the Commission's press releases on the spending returns from the 2019 parliamentary general election. LE confirmed that the Commission had published the spending returns in batches as not all parties and campaigners were able to deliver by the deadline. She noted there was one still outstanding. SM asked if there would a final press release issued once all spending returns had been published. LE agreed to consider whether this might be possible. AM asked if Hackney Council had suffered a recent cyber-attack. PD explained the matter was being dealt with, with the support of the National Cyber Security Centre and external experts. JH noted Cabinet Office would be in touch with parties shortly to consult on potential policy proposals relating to campaigning, imprints and intimidation for inclusion in the forthcoming Bill. The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 1 June 2021. Commission actions Status To update guidance resources for Returning Officers to encourage payments of nomination deposits by bank transfer over cash. Complete To provide further detail on status of Political Finance Online project relating to donation reporting. Complete Cabinet Office actions Status To make contact with parties to discuss Electoral Integrity Bill Related content Party panels Find out about the different party panels, and read the minutes of past meetings Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 1 December 2020 Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 1 September 2020 Electoral Commission Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 2 June 2020

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comfortable covers the issue. KB highlighted the guidance doesn't cover the specific concerns she had raised about categorising national or local spending. JH said that guidance encourages campaigners to apportion costs in line with the purpose of the leader's tours, in terms of whether it is national or local spending. LE said that the Commission had tweaked its guidance and would do so in line with the Elections Act changes on notional spending, and that while it was not aware of a significant issue in the past with leaders' tours and reporting spending, she understood the perception and concern. She added that the Commission wanted to facilitate lawful campaigning, which was a key reason why the regulatory support team was investing in stronger advice provision to help parties get their returns right. CH asked whether a broader conversation could be facilitated beyond requests for bespoke advice. LE said the Commission would consider the best way to approach the issue. SM noted the Commission's proposals to consult on a draft code of practice for third party campaigners, and its difference to a previous code of practice on spending for parties and campaigners that had not been approved by Parliament. JH explained that the difference was that the code on third party spending was a statutory duty introduced by the Elections Act. The draft code on spending for parties and campaigners had not been approved by Ministers as, at the time, Government felt it more appropriate to wait until the Elections Act had been passed. LE added that the Commission was keen for the codes to be statutory to provide parties and campaigners with a solid, legal reference point and a statutory defence if needed. JH agreed to consider with the Commission if any adjustments to the draft code were needed and whether there was parliamentary time to approve it. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/6/2022) The minutes were approved without any changes. KB noted DLUHC had an outstanding action from the last meeting, to email the PPP members requesting information on supporting candidates with disabilities to stand at elections. PD confirmed he had not yet received further details from the group requesting this information. KB asked about timings for a PPP meeting with Electoral Commissioners. CW suggested looking at arranging this for June 2023. Members agreed. KB asked whether the changes to subscribers, raised by DLUHC at the last meeting, were now confirmed as going ahead. PD said they would be in place for the May 2023 elections. KB added that the Commission's roundtables on digital imprints, held after the last PPP meeting, had been very helpful. Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising SM asked for an update on Political Finance Online. LE confirmed under current planning assumptions a launch was still due at the end of the 2022/2023 financial year, but that she was considering the findings of an external review of the project. She confirmed a plan for training had been drafted. CH asked for this to be added to future PPP meeting agendas as a standing item, which was agreed. SM noted the parties had seen demonstrations of the registration aspect of the system, but not the donations. KB expressed concern about the timing of an end of financial year launch given the proximity to an election, and the need to train a small team, which CH agreed with. LE noted this feedback, and confirmed the parties would have fair warning about launch and training. Format and dates of future meetings The next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 6 December. KB asked whether PPP members wanted to continue with hybrid meetings, noting the technical issues experienced. PPP members were happy to continue. CW noted the Commission was happy to host the meeting if helpful, and would discuss with DLUHC. Any other business KB raised concerns about clarity of guidance on aggregation, suggesting there had been differing advice from the Commission between written guidance and verbal advice. LE agreed to check the guidance on the Commission's website was up to

date and confirmed with the other parties present that they had received a recent letter from the Commission on this point providing updated guidance. JH noted a letter shared with the PPP by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up on spending limits and security expenses, and that he looked forward to their feedback.

Commission actions Status Consider whether a seminar or roundtable to discuss how to report spending on leaders' tours is the best mechanism to support compliance. Re-circulate letter on aggregations. DLUHC actions Status Circulate updated Elections Act implementation timetable via email.

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Who was at the meeting Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM), chair of meeting
Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM) Jonathan Burkitt Megan Tucker Labour Party:
Andrew Whyte (AW) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Plaid Cymru: Carl Harris (CH)
Electoral Commission: Shaun McNally, Chief Executive (SMcN) Craig Westwood, Director
of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation
(LE) Ryan McCullough, Public Affairs Manager Alex White, Senior Communications
Officer Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Paul Docker (PD)
Introduction to Shaun McNally, Chief Executive of the Electoral Commission SM
welcomed SMcN to his first Westminster PPP meeting. SMcN welcomed the opportunity to
join the first PPP meeting and said he was looking forward to building a relationship
with the PPP built on trust. He highlighted his priorities for the Commission, noting
that the aim was to maintain trust and confidence in the integrity, accessibility and
security of elections. He also highlighted the Commission's work to support political
parties to campaign with confidence within the regulatory framework. He offered to
meet PPP members on an individual basis. Minutes of the last meeting and actions
arising (PPP 2/2/2022) The minutes were approved without any changes. CH noted an
action from the previous meeting regarding PEF Online was now resolved. Post-election
review – May 2022 elections CW said that the Commission's initial assessment was that
the polls were delivered successfully with no significant issues, and noted the hard
work of electoral administrators to ensure the smooth-running of the polls. He added
that the Commission was now gathering information from the electoral community ahead
of publishing post-poll reports in the autumn. PD also noted DLUHC's assessment that
the polls were delivered successfully without major trouble, thanks to the efforts of
those involved in their delivery. KB welcomed the Commission's online advice
surgeries for candidates and agents ahead of the elections, which SM also noted were
helpful in the context of the Scotland-focused surgeries. KB raised inconsistency
between advice given on the call, and written guidance, in relation to a query on
declaring posters. LE noted she would welcome further feedback on the advice
surgeries, and that the Commission recognised the importance of consistency of
guidance and advice, which it was working to improve. CH raised concerns from police
SPOCs that the number of complaints against independent candidates in Wales had been
higher than usual. He asked whether the Commission was aware of this, and whether it
was related to the guidance and support independent candidates receive. LE explained
that the Commission was conducting a post-poll survey of police SPOCs where it may
come up. PD confirmed this issue had been raised at the Wales Electoral Coordination
Board (WECB), and that some independent candidates had been unaware of their
responsibilities. SMcN confirmed the Commission's Wales office had picked this up
from WECB and would be looking into it. Local election (England) nominations – DLUHC
PD noted his comments at the December 2021 meeting of the PPP regarding proposals to
reduce the number of subscribers needed at local elections in England from 10 to 2.
He explained that while the proposal was not taken forward in the Elections Act, the
Minister was now minded to make the change. He asked whether the PPP members were
supportive. AM, KB and AW – as representatives of parties which stand candidates in

local elections – were all in favour, noting the temporary change introduced in May 2021 for Covid-secure elections had not had a negative impact. PD noted he would report back to the Minister that the proposal had cross-party support, and that he would be happy to have further conversations on this at a later date. Elections Act – DLUHC PD provided an update on the Elections Act, noting it had received Royal Assent in May, and that DLUHC was now focused on preparing the necessary secondary legislation for implementation, and was working closely with the Commission on this. PD explained that DLUHC were reviewing implementation timelines and while he could not give exact timings for implementation, measures would be phased in, with some in force for May 2023, some later in 2023, and some in 2024. He added that he was happy to provide further updates on timings when available. AW asked where the introduction of digital imprints fits into the phased approach, noting the need for early preparation as this was likely to have a significant impact on how parties campaign. PD agreed to update the PPP on this, and wider timescales, via email following DLUHC's review. SM noted the differences in digital imprints regimes in Scotland and the rest of the UK, and asked whether conversations were taking place to ensure these worked together. PD confirmed conversations were taking place with devolved governments. KB asked when the overseas voter provisions were expected to come into force. PD confirmed this was likely to be from May 2024. CW noted that the Lib Dems Overseas group had been in touch with the Commission, and offered the same to other parties with overseas representative groups, to establish contacts ahead of work on this measure commencing in due course. CW provided an update on the Commission's work preparing for the implementation of the Elections Act, and that it was waiting to see draft secondary legislation from DLUHC. He explained the Commission was emphasising the need for phased introduction of the Act's measures, and being clear about the risks created by a lack of timely information on implementation from the Government, so that the electoral community could be well-prepared. Electoral Commission update report AM asked about the Commission's digital imprints roundtables. LE confirmed that details would be sent to all who had signed up, and that those unable to attend could contribute outside the roundtable. SM asked about the Political Finance Online project. LE said the Commission was still on track for the new system to go live later in the financial year for political parties, but that it was conducting a review on timings. She noted the Commission was working on training opportunities for parties and would be in touch in due course. She confirmed there would be opportunities for parties to be shown the reporting part of the new system following previous demonstrations of the registration part. Format and date of future meetings SM asked whether the PPP should move to hybrid or in-person meetings from September. Members discussed the pros and cons of hybrid meetings, but agreed that the Commission and DLUHC should work on a proposal for September's meeting. SM asked about the proposal from before Covid for a meeting including Commissioners and party treasurers. CW agreed to take the issue away and consider an appropriate time. Any other business PD said that he would be emailing PP members to request information on support candidates with disabilities needed to stand at elections. The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 6 September 2022. Commission actions Status Consider best timing for a meeting with Commissioners and party treasurers. Work with DLUHC on options for hybrid or in-person meeting in September. DLUHC actions Status Email PPP members for information on candidates with disabilities.

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On this page Elections Bill 2019 general election spending returns Commission enforcement policy with specific emphasis on accounting units Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 7/12/2021) Electoral Commission update report First published: 14 June 2022 Last updated: 14 June 2022 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM), chair of meeting Catherine Latham (CL) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Carl Harris (CH) Alba Party: Chris McEleny (CM) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer (AMW) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Paul Docker (PD), present for agenda item 1 Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Elections Bill BC outlined the Bill's progress through Parliament, noting that the UK Government would be publishing further policy statements on online absent voting applications, and overseas voters. BC provided an update on the current implementation timetable and asked for any thoughts or concerns on this proposed timetable; none were raised. She noted that the Department was working with the Commission on implementation, given its role in supporting delivery of the measures. BC also said that some live issues had been raised since the last PPP meeting, including the Bill's measures on secrecy of postal votes, and regarding candidate and agent addresses on ballot papers. PD set out the background to the concerns about the secrecy measures, noting that they had been drafted in such a way to cover the period of time a person has their postal ballot paper, which could in theory cause issues such as if the voter decided to hand their ballot in to a polling station. PD said that officials were considering amending the measures, so that they only cover the period of time in which the postal ballot is held to when it is completed. AM agreed that this should address concerns about the original drafting. PD highlighted that a backbench amendment had been tabled at Commons Report Stage which would allow candidates to use a town or village on ballot papers, rather than their full address or constituency. He noted that it was difficult to legally define a town or village, and that the Minister was minded to agree on allowing the use of local authority names as an alternative. GD asked whether this might work in relation to those candidates who stood in a cross-county constituency. SM added that it may look like a candidate is in the constituency, even if they are not in the local authority. AM and PD highlighted it would be up to the candidate to decide which form of address worked best for them. CL asked whether the first half of a postcode could be used; PD explained this had been considered but it would not sufficiently demonstrate proximity to the constituency, and could also cause problems in Northern Ireland. PD also noted the parliamentary interest in making similar changes to agents' addresses, explaining this was being considered, but any changes were unlikely to be in the Elections Bill. 2019 general election spending returns AM asked for an update on the Commission's publication and regulatory consideration of the 2019 UK parliamentary general election spending returns. LE explained the returns had all been published, and that there was no overarching review ongoing, but that if any individual casework was underway, this would progress as normal. Commission enforcement policy with specific emphasis on accounting units AM set out his concerns with how the Commission had handled some enforcement issues relating to accounting units, noting comments made at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee in December by the Commission Chair, John Pullinger, about supporting volunteers to meet their legal

obligations. He also highlighted that the Commission's enforcement notices incorrectly refers to volunteers as party staff, rather than volunteers, and that online training for volunteers would be useful. AW also raised concerns and highlighted the main issue as being around late reporting by accounting units. This required the central party to 'crack the whip' to follow Commission guidance, which in turn had a negative effect on the willingness of volunteers to participate. CH highlighted that PEF Online does not allow parties to update registered accounting unit officers (LE agreed to look into this, and noted the aim of making such tasks easier through the new PF Online system). GD asked whether the Commission would consider online training for volunteers and candidates, to avoid putting them off from participating. CL suggested the Commission's approach to contacting the party regarding late or impermissible donations can be inconsistent, particularly in whether it writes to the accounting unit or the central party. She explained this made it difficult for the central party to communicate to volunteers what is expected of them. LE thanked the PPP members for their feedback, noting she would take it away for further consideration. She highlighted the development of the Commission's regulatory support work, which would help support political parties at all levels, including volunteers. She noted the Commission's recent survey had received nearly 400 responses, and that a key finding had been the need to support volunteers. LE added that the Commission's new Head of Regulatory Support would be using these responses to inform an outline regulatory support strategy, which would be shared with the parties for discussion. She noted this strategy would include training and webinars for parties. LE said that the Commission wanted to work with parties to help them get it right, but that legal obligations on central parties meant that the Commission has to take a case-by-case approach. She noted the Commission is planning to review its enforcement policy during the next financial year, which would provide an opportunity for parties to provide feedback. AW said it would be useful to know what the Commission's view is of a robust compliance system within political parties, and that he was happy to work with the Commission to get it right. LE agreed to follow up on the issue of a robust compliance system, but noted it would be different for different parties depending on their structure. AW suggested that a principles-based approach would be useful, which could act as a steer to parties while acknowledging their differences in structures. AW also questioned the approach of issuing low level fines for offences, highlighting that despite the central party's best efforts, errors from volunteers happen, and a £200 fine may not be effective. LE said that enforcement action was decided on a case-by-case basis, and that while low level fines had been successful in driving up compliance, the Commission was also trying to make better use of other measures such as compliance notices. SM raised a concern with the Commission's approach to compliance notices, noting they do not invite the party to respond or provide representation, but are held on the party's record. LE explained that compliance notices are used to provide a resolution in a limited set of circumstances, and that they appear on party records to encourage them to be taken seriously, but that she would reflect on the process and language used in the notices. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 7/12/2021) AM noted that he had sent apologies for the last meeting, which were not reflected in the draft minutes. The minutes were agreed as amended. Electoral Commission update report CH noted that the Commission's guidance webpage for the Welsh local government elections, which was linked to in the report, contained blank or dummy documents, including the nomination papers. LE agreed to follow this up with the Commission's guidance team. The update report was noted without discussion or question. Commission

actions Status Review issue with PEF Online not allowing parties to update registered accounting unit officers.

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On this page Introduction from John Pullinger Minutes of the last meeting and actions

arising (PPP 1/6/2021) Elections Bill and RNIB's Turned Out report Update on

Political Finance Online Electoral Commission update report AOB First published: 10

December 2021 Last updated: 10 December 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the

meeting Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW), chair of meeting Scottish National Party:

Scott Martin (SM) Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt OBE (AM) Megan Tucker (MT) Liberal

Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Alba Party: Chris McEleny

(CM) Electoral Commission: John Pullinger, Chair (JP) Alex Attwood, Commissioner for

the smaller parties (AA) Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and

Guidance (AI) Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research (CW)

Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Alex White, Senior Communications Officer

(AMW) Cabinet Office: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) Elizabeth Jacobs (EJ)

Introduction from John Pullinger On behalf of the PPP, AW congratulated JP on his

appointment as Chair of the Commission. JP gave an overview of his work in the role

so far, noting that building relationships with the Commission's key stakeholders was

an important priority. He said that he had been keen to meet the Westminster PPP

members, and while the nature of the Commission's regulatory role meant the parties

may not always agree with its decisions, the Commission was keen to support them and

understand any concerns they had. AW asked whether anything had surprised JP in his

first few months. JP said that he was impressed with how well the electoral system

worked for the May elections, despite the complexity of the polls. He noted the

passion and commitment of parties and campaigners, in particular, but added that

there was a need to ensure all parts of the system – including regulatory and

enforcement authorities – worked well together to meet any future challenges. AW also

welcomed AA to his first Westminster PPP meeting and invited him to introduce

himself. AA noted his background in Northern Ireland politics, and explained that in

his role as Commissioner nominated by smaller parties, he is keen to have ongoing

discussions with the smaller parties so that he can better reflect their perspective.

Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 1/6/2021) AW noted he would

follow-up on an action from the June meeting, to share with the Commission details of

ROs which had not accepted bank transfers ahead of the May elections. LE confirmed

that the Commission plans to publish a spending tool for May's parliamentary

elections, similar to that published following the 2019 UKPGE, and that the

Commission continues to consider how best to make parties aware of guidance changes

as part of its broader regulatory support strategy. KB explained that she and LE

would discuss separately how to facilitate efforts for the parties to meet with the

NPCC to discuss how case updates could be distributed to parties. AW also noted the

parties would welcome the return of electoral integrity roundtables. The minutes were

agreed. Elections Bill – Cabinet Office BC noted that Second Reading of the Elections

Bill was taking place in the House of Commons later that day, and that it would move

reasonably quickly to Committee Stage if it passed Second Reading. She thanked the

PPP members for their input on the Bill's provisions to date. KB asked when the Bill

would be on the statute books, so parties could plan for implementation. BC explained

the working assumption was by the end of the Parliamentary session in May 2022. AW

raised those provisions in the Bill which may have a bigger impact on electoral

administrators, and asked whether there were any indications as to the lead-in times

for implementation. BC explained implementation timelines were currently being worked

through, but that the intention was to adhere to the Gould principle, which

recommends legislation should be in place six months before polling day. BC added that Ministers aimed to implement the Bill's provisions by the end of this Parliament, and would work with the electoral community and the Electoral Commission to achieve this. AW suggested keeping the Elections Bill as a standing agenda item for future PPP meetings. BC agreed and also offered to pick up any issues outside of PPP meetings where helpful, given the PPP meetings may not align with parliamentary progress on the Bill. CW confirmed the Commission would be happy with the Bill as a standing agenda item, and set out the role of the Commission in relation to implementation of the measures. He noted that work had already begun to consider how the Commission's public awareness work might be best focused. and RNIB's Turned Out report - Cabinet Office PD provided an overview of RNIB's Turned Out report on the May 2021 elections, noting its recommendations around access to information provided to voters by political parties and local authorities. He explained there was more for the electoral community to do on this, and encouraged parties to consider the recommendations. AW suggested he would share the report with his party's elections team, and noted there were also recommendations for electoral administrators and local authorities. AI highlighted the key findings from the Commission's post-poll research, due to be published as part of its election reporting in the week commencing 13 September, noting that while there was a high level of voter satisfaction generally, this was lower among voters with disabilities. She agreed that there was more the electoral community could do to improve accessibility at elections, and confirmed that the Commission was looking at how this could be reflected in guidance and performance standards, in line with considering the changes in the Elections Bill around accessibility. AW suggested inviting RNIB to the next PPP meeting to discuss their report in further detail. PD agreed, and offered to put someone in touch to arrange this. Update on Political Finance Online – Electoral Commission LE set out the background to the Political Finance Online project, noting that the parties were aware that the Commission had brought development in-house in early 2021 after being let down by an external developer. She explained that this had been challenging, but that it also meant there was more flexibility over how the new system was being built. LE noted that the parties had previously expressed a strong preference for the new system to launch in January, at the start of their financial years, so the Commission is now working towards a January 2022 launch for the party side of the new system which would allow parties to meet their registration and finance obligations. She confirmed the parties would be contacted imminently and invited to give feedback on the system ahead of launch, so that feedback could be taken on board. LE also explained that further functionality would be added to the system in future releases of the software and that the Commission was looking to best practice elsewhere on how to keep parties updated on this, such as the GOV.UK roadmap. Electoral Commission update report The update report was noted with no questions or discussion. AOB Electoral Commission Chief Executive AW asked whether there were any plans for transitional arrangements for the role of Commission Chief Executive ahead of Bob Posner's retirement in spring 2022. JP confirmed that work on recruitment was underway and that there would be a smooth handover to the new Chief Executive. In-person PPP meetings KB asked whether there were any plans to return to in-person PPP meetings. AI explained that the Commission was happy to keep this under review and explore in-person or hybrid options for future meetings. PD noted he was happy to discuss with the Commission the best use of Cabinet Office and Commission meeting rooms for future PPP meetings. The PPP agreed that the next meeting would be held virtually. Next meeting The date of the next meeting was confirmed, Tuesday 7

December 2021. Commission actions Status Louise Edwards to discuss with Kerry Buist how to facilitate a meeting between NPCC and the parties. Add Elections Bill as a standing agenda item for future PPP meetings. Liaise with Cabinet Office on inviting RNIB to the next PPP meeting to discuss Turned Out report in further detail.

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On this page Who was at the meeting Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/12/2022) Elections Act 2022 Postal strikes and elections Published guidance for candidates and agents Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising First published: 20 June 2023 Last updated: 20 June 2023 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt (AM), chair of meeting Jonathan Burkitt (JB) Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist (KB) Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM) Alba Party: Chris McEleny (CM) Electoral Commission: Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance (AI) Pete Mills, Senior Communications Officer Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Apologies: Geraint Day (Plaid Cymru) Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 6/12/2022) AM noted some changes made at SM's request. The minutes were approved as corrected. LE said that she had spoken to Nick Adams, the NPCC's new elections lead, and has requested a meeting, where she will raise the parties' request to meet him. LE confirmed that the Commission's regulatory support team is working on proposals to increase the priority of leaders' tour queries. AI said that forms for Voter Authority Certificate applications were shared with the parties when applications opened on 16 Jan. LE highlighted information about the Commission's voter ID public awareness work in the update report and on its website. AM recommended that the Commission highlight to parliamentarians that voter ID was not in force for elections before May. LE said that this will be considered at any upcoming meetings. AM said that new nominations papers are now available and noted that the Commission's guidance was working effectively in setting out the changes introduced by the Elections Act. LE confirmed that parties' feedback had been added to the PEF Online replacement system project manager's action list. Elections Act 2022 BC gave an update on implementation of the Voter Authority Certificate. The service went live on 16 January, with no service disruptions. There have now been 14,500 applications. She noted feedback from administrators on the quality of photos submitted with applications. She said that although the system has plenty of capacity, early applications would be welcome to avoid a spike close to the application deadline. She noted planning is now underway by local election teams for polling stations and welcomed the imminent publication of the Commission's polling station handbook. BC said that work was gearing up on the next tranche of measures due to take effect after May's polls, and offered to provide an update on online absent voting applications, overseas voters, and changes to postal and proxy voting requirements at the next meeting. JH said that the remaining campaign-related measures would be commenced in Autumn, including imprints, changes to spending controls and measures on intimidation. He said that DLUHC was working with the Commission on statutory guidance on imprints and the Code of Practice for campaigners, which is likely to come in earlier than the other measures. Noting the Scottish Government's consultation covering agents being permitted to use a PO box as their address, KB highlighted that there was conflicting guidance at present: currently agents can use a PO box for imprints but not on nomination papers. AM asked the Commission to share the polling station handbook with parties. AI confirmed this would be shared when published on 8 Feb. Postal strikes and elections KB raised the impact of postal strikes on postal vote turnout, citing a 5% fall in turnout compared to non-strike periods. AM asked whether the Commission could add a prompt for administrators to

take account of postal strikes when sending out ballots and contact Royal Mail locally to emphasise the importance of postal ballots. AI said that the Commission's regional teams were already speaking to local authorities with by-elections about this issue, and considering any other actions that could be taken. PD said that DLUHC were discussing this issue with Royal Mail. Published guidance for candidates and agents AM welcomed the publication of guidance highlighting changes introduced by the Elections Act. LE said that the Commission was planning to build some consultation into the process for publication of guidance next year, and would welcome any lessons learned. AM raised the difference between guidance published as HTML and as a PDF, asking whether PDFs could be linked. LE said that the HTML guidance can be downloaded as a PDF, though the PDF would not automatically update as the guidance on the website was updated. She explained that the move to publishing guidance in HTML format aims to make it more accessible, in line with recent regulations on the accessibility of public websites. She also noted practical reasons for the move, as PDFs are not user-friendly on phone screens, can be difficult to navigate, and limit accessibility to people with vision impairments. She said that although some older PDFs remain and some forms would not change format, more guidance would be made available as HTML at each election. SM said that some PDFs appear in different versions, and asked whether PDFs generated from HTMLs would have accessibility features. LE said that the website was still relatively new and that the Commission would update any broken links identified. AM asked for details of how many people download guidance as PDFs, as it is possible that some people may find HTML more difficult. LE said that she would look into stats on this. Electoral Commission Update Report – paper for information and any issues arising AM said that parties were working through Q4 reports, including aggregation of donations. He noted that parties were surprised by the guidance on aggregation, as they were previously operating with more transparency than is demanded in the guidance. He asked whether the Commission could make clear that over-reporting would not be penalised. JB asked about aggregation of donations for a central office. If a central party received multiple donations from the same donor, some of which breach the reporting threshold and some don't, the law says only to report the ones above the threshold, which he noted appears less transparent. AM said that KB had raised an issue about cut-off dates raised by recent enforcement by the Commission. He noted that for enforcement going back some years, it was difficult to identify who was responsible, or whether they were still a member of the party. LE said that she will take these points away. She said that guidance on aggregation reflected the law, but that the Commission was looking at aggregation for accounting units and would report at a future PPP. Any other business PD said that a recent accessibility working group meeting had featured Northern Ireland's Chief Electoral Officer Virginia McVea, who had outlined accessibility measures taken at the last NI election, including a telephone helpline listing the candidates on the ballot paper in order to assist blind and partially sighted voters. He suggested that parties could learn lessons and build on this, but that DLUHC recognised the challenges of multiple elections and sets of candidates. AM said that parties were looking for ways to make information about candidates more accessible, but asked for reassurance about whether this would affect candidates' spending returns. JB asked about gifts in kind regarding prizes for auctions. He asked whether if someone plans to purchase and donate a holiday for an auction prize but don't do so until the time of the auction, whether the value should be calculated when the person offers it, or when they actually buy the prize. LE said that the Commission will look at these issues. The next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 6 June

2023. Commission actions Status Share the polling station handbook with parties.
Consider issue of gifts in kind regarding prizes for auctions.

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Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 2 June 2020 On this page COVID 19 and
considerations for May 2021 elections Minutes of the last meeting Update on Political
Finance Online Policy development grants – electoral formula Sponsorship and virtual
conferences Commission Update Report AOB First published: 17 June 2021 Last updated:
18 June 2021 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Scottish National Party:
Scott Martin (SM), chair of meeting Conservative Party: Alan Mabbutt OBE (AM) Labour
Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Plaid Cymru: Geraint Day (GD) Liberal Democrats: Kerry Buist
(KB) Electoral Commission: Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy &
Research (CW) Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation (LE) Ailsa Irvine, Director of
Electoral Administration and Guidance (AI) Laura McLeod, Public Affairs Manager (LM)
Cabinet Office: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Lizzie Jacob
(LJ) Association of s: Peter Stanyon (PS) Society of Local Authority Chief
Executives: Mark Heath (MH) COVID 19 and considerations for May 2021 elections SM
welcomed PS and MH to the meeting to discuss the May 2021 elections. PS noted the
challenge of the combination and number of elections due to take place in May 2021,
including the unknown future public health scenarios. He highlighted the ongoing
issue of by-elections, but noted concerns primarily related to the delivery of the
annual canvass during COVID 19. SM asked if the existing canvass framework was fit
for purpose. PH explained there were still uncertainties, even with canvass reform.
He noted the benefit of administrators being able to contact people by a variety of
different ways but also stated the challenges that would exist for any door knocking
exercise. AS agreed and highlighted the issue of local authorities potentially not
having sufficient staff due to other pressures. AS noted how reduced staffing levels
could impact on checking the permissibility of donations. GD highlighted that local
authorities were already under increased funding pressures and asked about any
concerns related to registration, particularly given the franchise changes in Wales.
PS and MH noted the funding pressures on local authorities regardless of the
pandemic. MH explained local authority staff had been redeployed in order to support
effective delivery of the canvass in the current circumstances. PD noted that MCLHG
were aware of funding and were in the process of considering if additional funding
could be provided, including relating to elections. SM explained the ongoing work in
Scotland to engage with stakeholders on possible scenarios related to postal and
proxy voting. AW highlighted the impact on parties spending if elections happen with
some social distancing measures in place and gave the examples of more print
material, more campaigning by phone. He asked if the spending limit could be looked
at. PD explained no decision had been taken and noted the need to understand the
potential impact on parties campaigning, and welcomed any input or feedback from
parties. GD explained the ICO had written to all parties regarding the tightening of
the rules on phone canvassing and highlighted the restrictive impact this would have.
AS agreed. PS raised the issue of postal voting and explained the need for approaches
to consider the supply chain and give advanced notice so administrators/ROs could be
properly resourced. AI explained the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments were
currently considering approaches. She noted that the combination of elections will
likely place strain on key suppliers and the systems, and explained that if the
elections take place within current legal framework, a higher number of postal votes
would be likely. PD explained the ongoing work to talk to suppliers, including
understanding the impact of the increased postal voting by voters. He also noted the
need to consider franchise changes in Scotland in Wales. AI explained the Commission
had done some early scenario modelling to understand any potential challenges and

what different situations on polling day might look like, particularly considering how to support local authorities, parties and campaigners, agents and tellers. MH noted that discussions were at early stages regarding premises and finding polling station staff. He highlighted that not all usual options would be practical or possible. PD explained that workshops were planned to consider processes and noted the importance of working with parties and stakeholders to understand issues. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 4/02/2020) The minutes were agreed. AM highlighted the word take was missing from point 3.2. LM agreed to update. LE agreed to consider how the case update could be distributed routinely by email to a parties distribution list. Update on Political Finance Online LE updated on the continued progress with the system. She detailed that as part of ongoing project assurance, and following legal review of the Financial Reporting user stories, the same validation of registration user stories had found no issues. Current legal engagement was on PDF templates for offline functionality, as well as email template correspondence. She explained the Commission had recently emailed parties for feedback on a proposal: adding an additional step to the existing process whereby each incoming accounting officer will be required to make a declaration either online or by signing a physical offline form. She welcomed any feedback from parties. KB and AW agreed to send over considered feedback by the deadline. AW noted that the Labour Party already produces job descriptions for all officer roles within the party, including chair and treasurer, which include the relevant legal responsibilities. Policy development grants – electoral formula SM raised the issue with the electoral formula and the impact of the delay to publication of the statistics by ONS. He raised simplification of the scheme and suggested linking it to the data used for the boundary reviews. LE explained that despite the delay of publication of data, the Commission wanted to provide assurance and pay an estimated amount to parties. She agreed on the need to find opportunities to try and simplify the scheme. JH agreed on the principle of simplifying the scheme but explained the Cabinet Office had no current plans to do so. Sponsorship and virtual conferences AM explained that given parties are having to virtual conferences, it would be useful if the Commission gave consideration to how PPERA might apply to online conferences hosted by zoom. He gave the example of adverts and noted the need to support parties on consideration of key issues and how to return appropriately. LE explained the Commission's legal and guidance teams were currently considering the question on how the PPERA provisions on conference stands should be interpreted in relation to virtual conferences, and in the context of social distancing measures. She welcomed any further information from the parties on potential plans, to enable the Commission to respond as helpfully as possible. GD asked for any guidance to be available as soon as possible to help inform planning. Commission Update Report AM noted the broad statement on voter confidence from the Commission's report on the 2019 Parliamentary general election and asked whether this could be a reaction to digital campaigning rather than the view of the ordinary voter. CW explained the trends had shown increasing concerns related to the use of campaigning or the media. He referenced the significant one in five people who were not confident in the way the last election had been run. Any other business SM raised his ongoing concerns with the data used in the Commission's candidate spending tool. LE acknowledged the concerns and offered to provide further information to demonstrate the accuracy of the data and how the filters work. SM agreed. Commission actions Status Provide advice to members on online party conferences and events. Complete: Louise to provide detail at meeting To provide further detail to SM on candidate spending tool Complete To use the September meeting to discuss the

Commission's next five year corporate plan with parties Ongoing: Bob to provide update at meeting. To consider how the case update could be distributed routinely by email to a parties distribution list. Ongoing Related content Party panels Find out about the different party panels, and read the minutes of past meetings Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 3 February 2020 Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 3 September 2019 Party registration decisions View our decisions on political party names, descriptions and emblems

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Parliamentary Parties Panel minutes: 6 June 2023 First published: 28 September
2023 Last updated: 28 September 2023 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting
Scottish National Party: Scott Martin (SM), chair of meeting Conservative Party: Alan
Mabbutt (AM) Jonathan Burkitt (JB) Labour Party: Andrew Whyte (AW) Liberal Democrats:
Kerry Buist (KB) Plaid Cymru Owen Roberts Geraint Day (GD) Alba Party: Chris McEleny
(CM) Electoral Commission: Louise Edwards, Director of Regulation and Digital
Transformation (LE) Craig Westwood, Director of Communications, Policy and Research
(CW) Pete Mills, Senior Communications Officer Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities: Paul Docker (PD) Becca Crosier (BC) James Hairsnape (JH) Imogen
Harris Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising (PPP 7/2/2023) SM raised a
number of outstanding actions on behalf of the PPP. He asked for an update on the
proposed meeting between the PPP and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). LE
said that the Commission would remind the NPCC of the parties' request, reiterating
that the Commission's permission is not needed to arrange a meeting with the PPP. AM
suggested that KB write to the NPCC as the chair of the next PPP meeting, to arrange.
KB asked for an update on previous queries about party leaders' tours; AM added it
would be useful if parties could be made aware of any guidance updates. LE said the
Regulatory Support team was arranging meetings with parties to make sure any updated
guidance is useful, in the run up to the next UKPGE. KB asked when guidance would be
ready, given the party was beginning to train staff and volunteers. LE offered to
follow up on the timetable, but noted that existing guidance already covers this
issue. KB expressed concern about inconsistencies between the Commission's written
guidance and advice provided during recent advice surgeries. LE expressed regret
about the issue, asked for details of the specific examples, and encouraged parties
to raise these concerns with the Commission when they happen, so they can be looked
into and addressed. SM asked whether the PPP mailing list could be better used to
highlight when new items are published on the Commission's website. CW said the
Commission was happy to do this, conscious of email volume and the existence of other
channels to keep parties updated. SM asked for an update on stats on the Commission's
guidance being accessed as PDFs rather than as HTML pages. LE said the data suggested
there had been one page view of PDF guidance for political parties in recent months.
SM raised cut-off dates for enforcement, which KB said related to the Commission not
responding quickly during investigations. LE noted it was unfortunate that parties
don't always get timely responses, which can be the result of Commission staff
working on multiple investigations. She outlined two proposed changes to the
Commission's enforcement policy, subject to Board approval: regular check-ins, and a
senior check-in should an investigation last 12 months, which was very rare. SM asked
if there was an update on aggregation of donations for accounting units. LE said the
Commission was working on how better to support compliance for parties with
accounting units and would consult with parties on the approach. SM asked for updates
on recent discussions on the impact of spending limits on accessibility costs, and
gifts in kind regarding auctions. On auctions, LE confirmed additional guidance was
coming, including examples. SM said it would be helpful to have examples on the grey
areas. On accessibility, LE reiterated the importance of providing information in an
accessible format, and that the Commission reads a narrow definition of unsolicited
material; for example, if a voter requests material in a different format, that is
not unsolicited and would not need to go on a spending return. May 2023 elections KB
raised concerns about the role of greeters at polling stations, including that their
presence will skew statistics on voter ID, and that the PPP had not been told about

them being in place. She said in some areas it had caused problems for tellers, given the amount of people outside polling stations to talk to voters. KB reported inconsistent understanding of voter ID amongst polling station staff. CW set out the Commission's post-poll research on voter ID, including that it would publish an initial analysis later in June and that it was collecting separate data from polling stations with greeters, and from those without greeters. He said the Commission was also running a public opinion survey to capture how many voters chose not to vote and for what reason. BC explained the legislation was not prescriptive about the use of greeters; it was a decision for individual Returning Officers to make. AW said his party had a similar experience to KB, including around counts and access to turnout data. He said a significant minority of Returning Officers had made it hard to scrutinise counts, and questioned whether it was caused by a lack of training or a lack of experience. AM agreed regarding the count process, noting an example of agents not being gathered before results were declared, which he said was happening too often. He noted the Commission produces comprehensive guidance, but questioned whether it was being read and applied fully. KB said there was a lack of consistency in approach to decisions on disputed ballots. PD clarified that while greeters or tellers could remind voters to bring photo ID, it was not their job to check ID and that they should not ask for it. He also noted that there were multiple instances of voters turning up to polling stations when they had filled in postal vote application forms provided by parties, and highlighted that parties needed to make it clear what the forms were for. PD also said DLUHC had heard feedback from RNIB that there had not been a significant change in the accessibility of information provided by the parties at the May elections. Elections Act 2022 BC provided an overview of timings for the remaining Elections Act measures coming into force, and said she would circulate an updated timetable via email. Online absent voting applications and postal and proxy voting restrictions come into force in Autumn, postal vote handling and secrecy in December, and overseas electors changes in January. BC said remaining campaigner measures – digital imprints, undue influence and intimidation – will come into force in November. JH confirmed the Commission had submitted digital imprints guidance to the Minister for approval. AW asked for an update on the postal and proxy voting changes, noting recent Government announcements regarding the need for identity checks. BC clarified that online absent voting applications will require an identity check in the same way online voter registration currently does, not a requirement to produce photo ID as with in-person voting. KB asked if someone in Scotland may need two separate postal vote applications, because of different timetables for reserved elections. BC confirmed this, noting that this had been discussed with the Scottish and Welsh governments, but there is increasing divergence of electoral law. She explained work was ongoing on communicating the changes to voters. Forward look PD said the PCC elections in England and Wales in May 2024 would require voter ID, and other Elections Act measures in force by then. He confirmed the usual process for candidates would be followed. PD provided an update on boundary changes, with the Boundary Commission due to report to the Secretary of State by 1 July, with orders being made by November. DLUHC is working with the sector to identify any risks and challenges ahead of boundary changes being in place by the next UKPGE. SM asked if the RO for constituencies would be selected on the basis of having a plurality of electors; PD confirmed this. Political Finance Online LE said the Commission had made progress in its discovery phase for a new online system ahead of moving to a delivery and design phase in the future. She said a survey would be sent shortly to all parties with an income of over £250k, to understand those

parties' technical infrastructures. LE said it would be helpful if PPP members could seek input from party technology leads. LE said the Commission was working through existing user stories and removing anything related to the old platform coding, but that not much had changed in terms of the actual user stories. She offered to share examples of this if the parties had particular queries. KB said timing of the new system was key, given capacity within parties would be tight in the run up to the UKPGE. SM asked if there was a target date for going live. LE said timescales for launching would be considered as part of the delivery phase, and that the Commission would bring the user group back and factor in timings. Electoral Commission Update Report SM noted the Commission's proposals to consult on an updated Code of Conduct for campaigners. He said the Code was voluntary and ultimately owned by the parties given they sign off on adhering to it; LE explained it was the Commission who drafts the Code's content and is responsible for sharing updated versions, and so can make proposals for content to be discussed by the parties. AM said the proposed addition to the Code on handling completed absent vote applications had been rejected by the parties in the past, and that it was unlikely the parties would agree to it this time. He noted the difference in handling applications and completed ballot papers. AW agreed with this point and said his party would not support the proposal to amend the Code. He said that while completed ballot packs should not be handled, providing and handling absent voting application forms was a fundamental part of responsible campaigning. He added that anecdotal feedback from voters was that collecting application forms was helpful. SM said parties collect application forms in the absence of a freepost option for voters to return their forms directly to their local authority. CW outlined the background to the proposal, saying the evidence base had changed recently with significant public concern about campaigners encouraging voters to return application forms to a campaigner address, rather than to the ERO. He said the Commission was happy to take views from parties on how to address those concerns, and that the Commission has a duty to put forward solutions to come to a constructive outcome. CM suggested that public concerns were a result of misunderstanding of what is and isn't legitimate practice, and that this should be addressed. KB said her party had responded to complaints about another party collecting application forms by noting it was entirely legal. GD agreed with the other parties, and noted a divergence issue where different absent voting systems apply in Scotland and Wales. Any other business KB noted the IT problems which had delayed the start of the meeting and there was a discussion about how to improve this for future meetings. SM suggested the parties could move their pre-meet to a virtual meeting the day before PPP meetings, which the Commission and DLUHC both agreed with. KB said IT problems would need to be fixed before the proposed senior-level meeting in September. CW agreed but noted that this would need to be in-person, and required agreement from parties that they would send senior representatives to make it a productive meeting. There was an overview of work being done by the Defending Democracy Taskforce to support cyber security for elected officials. The next meeting was agreed for Tuesday 5 September 2023. Commission actions Status Remind NPCC of PPP request for a meeting Follow up on timetable for guidance on party leader's tours Arrange proposed senior level meeting for September DLUHC actions Status Share Elections Act timetable with PPP members Complete