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First published: 26 February 2021 Last updated: 21 May 2021 Tuesday 24 November 2020 Tuesday 24 November 2020 Who was at the meeting Who was at the meeting Michael Sharpe, Scottish Labour Party (Chair) Gordon Dickson, Scottish Green Party John Hardy, Scottish Green Party Matt Edmonds, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Scott Martin, Scottish National Party Paul Moat, Scottish Liberal Democrats Isabel Drummond-Murray, Scottish Boundary Commissions Maria McCann, Scottish Government Chris Highcock, Electoral Management Board for Scotland Pete Wildman, Scottish Assessors Association (Char of Electoral Registration Committee Eleanor Tankard, Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland Rachel Winham, Royal Mail Scott Forsyth, Royal Mail The Electoral Commission:- Dame Susan Bruce, Electoral Commissioner, Scotland Alasdair Morgan, Electoral Commissioner Andy O'Neill, Head of Electoral commission, Scotland Sarah Mackie, Manager, Electoral Commission, Scotland Martin McKeown, Senior Adviser, Elections and s, Scotland Catherine Heggie, Partnerships and Information Officer Clara Cole, Head of Regulatory Support Lindsey Hamilton, Business Support Officer (Minutes) Apologies Malcolm Burr, Convener Electoral Management Board for Scotland and Iain Hockenhull, Scottish Government

Welcome and introductions Michael Sharpe (MS) noted apologies and welcomed those present. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 September 2020 were approved subject to the following corrections suggested by Scott Martin: Paragraph 3.6 was amended to reflect that Martin McKeown confirmed the guidance would be in the existing .pdf style. A reference was added to reflect that Andy O'Neill had confirmed that the Electoral Commission had never refused a S.10 request to give advice to a government. Preparations for the Scottish Parliamentary Election 2021 Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill and other legislation relating to Scottish Parliamentary election 2021 Maria McCann (MMcC) reported on progress of the Scottish General Election (Coronavirus) Bill and the Scottish Parliament Election Amendment Order. She summarised the contents of the draft Bill and advised that the Scottish Parliament Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee had held an evidence session on the draft Bill on 19 November. The Electoral Management Board (EMB), Association for s and the Electoral Commission (EC) had given evidence. The PPP asked questions in relation to the main provisions contained within the draft Bill and their impact on preparations for the May polls. Scott Martin (SM) noted the impact of moving the deadline for absent voting applications and the importance of ensuring that administrators were resourced to handle applications. He questioned the impact of moving the dissolution date for party spending limits in the long and short campaigns and wondered if it would be possible to change the date to allow an additional week in the long campaign. Public attitudes to voting in the context of Covid-19 Sarah Mackie (SMa) advised that the Commission had undertaken further research of public attitudes to voting under Covid-19. This followed similar research undertaken in August. The results would be shared with the PPP in the next week but she confirmed that the research had largely

confirmed the findings of the earlier research undertaken in August. The Commission would reflect on how to incorporate the findings in to its approach to public awareness for the May polls. She agreed to share the resources that had been produced to assist local authorities with key messaging. The Commission would continue to discuss the approach to awareness raising with key stakeholders including ROs and EROs. Observations from Council by-elections Martin McKeown (MMcK) provided a summary of the findings and key lessons learned from the Commission's observations from the recent by-elections held in Scotland under coronavirus restrictions. He advised that the intention was to produce and publish a report by the end of the year. The PPP discussed the key findings and the implications arising for the May polls. The following points were raised and discussed. MS noted the late communication of the decision to postpone the North Lanarkshire by- elections close to the day of poll SM asked if the Commission intended to repeat the public opinion research. SMA advised that there were no specific plans to do so. She agreed to provide the PPP with data arising from the Commission's winter tracker. SMA confirmed that the Commission would be producing a household booklet. She undertook to confirm details of Phase II of the Electoral Commission public awareness campaign at the January PPP. Mathew Edmonds (ME) noted that it would be harder to campaign with voters more apprehensive about going to the polling station than normal. In respect of the postal vote application deadline of April 6, he wondered whether people might not really start paying attention to an election when it was still a month away. SMA noted that the household booklet had to carry a number of messages, including around how to complete the ballot papers along with electoral registration and different methods of voting and voters were more likely to act on messaging closer to the poll. However, other methods would also be used to disseminate earlier information on postal voting. PW observed that evidence from the Independence Referendum when demand for postal votes increased by 2.6%; 1% in the months ahead, but 1.6% in the final weeks. The Clackmannanshire by-election had shown a very minor increase in postal votes and the Electoral Commission survey results were clear in that where people were encouraged to vote by post, there followed an increase in numbers of postal vote applications. Clear communication about the electoral timetable to voters early on was essential. Chris Highcock (CH) reported the pattern of voting in polling places during the Edinburgh by-election had been different from normal; with more people working from home there was less reason for people to attend early, so there had not been the same early morning rush from people on the way to work at 7:00 am SM said the current proposal to change the date of poll card issue would force postal vote applications into a smaller number of days as poll card issue was the point when voters applied for a postal vote. AON said the Electoral Commission household leaflet would be issued in time to flag up the postal vote deadline. Guidance update MMcK provided an update on the preparation and publication of guidance for administrators and campaigners in advance of the May polls, including new guidance on digital imprints. He advised that the Director of Regulation would be circulating her Regulation Bulletin to campaigners shortly. Guidance would be published before the Christmas break. This included the new guidance on imprints. Clara Cole (CC) advised that the Regulatory Support team was working hard to get guidance out in a timely manner and would like to engage with campaigners to identify what further supports were needed. Arising from the report, SM and MC both commented on the importance to parties of getting sight of the imprints guidance as soon as possible in order for them to ensure consistency of interpretation and compliance within their organisations. MMcK advised he would circulate the guidance as soon as it had been signed off and

published. He offered to meet with parties to discuss the guidance once it was published. The PPP agreed that MMcK (a) confirm to parties when guidance had been published and (b) meet with parties thereafter as required. Scottish Government update A report on current legislative developments had been circulated. The PPP agreed to note the report. Scotland Office/Cabinet Office update A report from the Scotland Office / Cabinet Office had been circulated. The PPP agreed (a) to note that report; (b) that any issues arising from the report be highlighted to Lindsey Hamilton. Scottish Boundary Commissions update Isabel Drummond-Murray (ID-M) provided an update on (a) the outcomes from the LGBCs reviews of electoral arrangements in Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire and Highland council areas; (b) the final recommendations arising from the reviews of the Scottish parliament constituencies of Glasgow and Central Scotland to Ministers in March 2020; and (c) the work programme arising from the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill. Royal Mail update Rachel Winham (RW) noted the increased demand for postal votes and confirmed that Royal Mail were currently putting plans in place for the May polls, including arrangements for delivering and collecting postal ballots. CH suggested the matter could be discussed through the EMB and agreed to arrange a meeting to discuss. PW suggested that the EC be invited to attend. The PPP agreed that CH arrange a meeting to discuss the issue. EMB update CH and PW provided updates on (a) Council by elections; (b) planned directions by the Convener for the May polls; (c) plans for a joint event with the EC for Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers in advance of the polls; (d) implementation of the extension of the franchise to qualifying foreign nationals. Arising from discussion, MS noted the directions would be helpful in promoting consistency for voters. PW asked that parties use the absent voter list to check whether voters were already postal voters or, as has occurred in the past, where the person had died. Paul Moat (PM) said they had met with resistance from ERO staff against processing data and had a lot of chasing up to get information out of them. PW said he had a meeting with EROs on 3 December and would flag up that they should respond quickly to these requests. The PPP agreed that PW raise PM's point with EROs and otherwise noted the report. Electoral Commission update MMcK and CHe provided updates on (a) new education resources for young people aged 14-18 (in formal and informal education) which were now live on the Commission's website; (b) the submission of draft Codes of Practice on Spending at Scottish Parliamentary elections to Scottish Ministers for approval; and (c) discussions that had taken place with EROs relating to the progress of the annual canvass and the imminent publication of a report on progress. Arising from discussion SM asked if the Commission had taken any external legal advice on the developments of the Codes. MMcK agreed to clarify. The PPP agreed that MMcK (a) clarify the position with regard to external advice taken on the draft Codes of Practice; and (b) circulate a copy of the report on the annual canvass once published. Dates of future meetings Thursday 21 January 2021 10:30am Thursday 4 March 2021 at 11am