

Confirmed 7 September 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 13 July 2005, in London

Present: Sam Younger (SY) (Chair)
Pamela Gordon (PG)
Glyn Mathias (GM)
Karamjit Singh (KS)

In attendance: Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Kay Jenkins (KJ)
Angela Salt (AS)
Kate Sullivan (KBS)
Rael Zackon (RZ)
Mike Harold (MH)
Mark Williams (MW)
Beccy Lloyd (BL)
Scott Walters (SW)
Doug Stewart (DS)

Apologies: Sir Neil McIntosh

1. Minutes of the meeting of 9 June 2005.

- 1.1 The Commissioners agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2005, subject to typographical amendments.
- 1.2 KJ advised that the report on participation and turnout at the General Election would be ready in September; there would be a summary available for the party conferences. There were difficulties obtaining information from local authorities, although at present there are only twelve local authorities which have not responded. The media and campaigns analysis, and the accessibility report would be ready in October. The Commissioners asked for a paper for the meeting in September.

2. Application to change party name

- 2.1 The Commissioners considered the report concerning the application from Operation Christian Vote to change its name to the Christian Party 'Proclaiming Christ's Lordship'. The Commissioners considered that there were no grounds on which this application could be refused.

- 2.2 **The Commissioners agreed to approve the application from Operation Christian Vote to change its party name.**

3. Better Governance for Wales: White Paper

- 3.1 KJ presented the report on the White Paper which outlined proposals for additional powers for the Welsh Assembly. The Commissioners were referred to the proposal set out in paragraph 3.7 of the report, concerning the proposed changes to the arrangements for constituency and regional list candidates. The Commissioners were advised that there as also an alternative proposal, which seemed to have some cross-party support. The deadline for response is 16 September.
- 3.2 The Commissioners noted that there had been no consultation on the proposals, and that there would be not time for the Commission to undertake any consultation of its own. The Commissioners agreed that the proposals would be disadvantageous to minority parties. Although voters may not understand the implications of the second vote, the present system did command public support and the Commission had no evidence from its previous research that the public demanded a change of this nature.
- 3.3 The Commissioners agreed that the formulation of a response should include:
- A strong statement on the need for consultation and the maximum cross-party consensus
 - Objective arguments on the implications of the proposals
 - The effect on 1999 and 2003 Assembly election results of using the proposed arrangements
 - A copy of responses from political parties in Wales (or their comments to include in the Commission response)
- 3.4 The Commissioners also agreed to consider the matter further at the next meeting, so that the implications for Scotland could be discussed. A further paper would then be prepared for the meeting on 7 September.
- 3.5 **The Commissioners agreed that a response should be formulated as set out in paragraph 3.3 above, and that there should be further discussion at the next meeting on 28 July.**

4. Electoral Administration Bill

- 4.1 MW presented the report, and advised Commissioners that the introduction of the Bill was very likely to be delayed until October. This would have implications for implementation and would affect the

Commission's approach to the Bill. For changes to take effect for the elections and canvas in 2006, Royal Assent would be required in February 2006.

4.2 MW outlined the areas where the draft Bill did not address the Commission's recommendations:

- Individual registration
- Additional security measures
- Funding of electoral services
- Keeper status and funding of CORE
- Clearing house for postal votes processing
- Deregistration of political parties
- Schedule 7 of PPERA

4.3 The attention of Commissioners was also drawn to provisions for:

- Checking the eligibility of certain Commonwealth citizens to vote in Parliamentary elections. The Commissioners had concerns about the practicality and enforceability of the provisions.
- The possibility of having several CORE keepers and therefore several systems. Commonality was an absolute requirement.
- The absence of performance standards for registration officers
- The elimination of counterfoils. The proposed alternative arrangement was considered impracticable.

4.4 The Commissioners agreed that, at this stage, SY should write to Lord Falconer expressing concern at the delay in introducing the Bill, and that this should be made public.

4.5 SY referred to the ten-minute rule Bill introduced by Patrick Cormack MP, and to discussions concerning service voters. GM reported that a meeting of the all-party group on Citizenship and the Constitution was well attended. There was a lively discussion, and he felt that the message on funding had been received.

4.6 **The Commissioners noted the current position regarding the Electoral Administration Bill, and agreed that SY, if necessary, should write to the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs, expressing concern at the delay in introducing the Bill into Parliament.**

5. Matters for information

5.1 The Commissioners received the following items for information:

- Registration of political and third parties
- The launch of an Election Planning Group for Wales
- Attendance at party conferences
- The continuation of the sub-committee of the 1922 Committee

5.2 AS and BL gave a presentation on the General Election Campaign results. The Commissioners thanked Beccy Lloyd for her contribution to the production of this and other campaign reports.

5.3 The Commissioners also thanked Graham Turner for his contribution to the production of publications and to the creation of the Commission's website.

5.4 SY had agreed to delegate to PW decisions on extensions of time for submission of statutory returns by three political parties.

5.5 The Disaster Recovery Plan was set in motion on Thursday 7 July 2005, following the bomb attacks in London.