

Summary of the Commissioners' Meeting on 29 January 2001

Action points

1	RC to write to the parties with copies of the register entry and explain what information will appear on the public register and future aspirations for the website	16/2/01
2	RC/BS meet to discuss financial assumptions associated with the merger with LGCE	30/1/01 - Completed
3	Representative from LGCE be invited to address a Commissioners about the role of the LGCE	8/3/01
4	PH to have the vote allocation of the parties checked in respect of the grants to meet start up costs	12/2/01 - Completed
5	RC to write to the parties detailing the mechanism for allocating the grants to meet start up costs and to make the information available on the website	12/2/01
6	Chairman's preface to be added to the 5 year plan	30/1/01 - Completed
7	The position related to the liability of Commissioners is to be checked	8/3/01
8	SY to write to the Broadcasters after the commencement order was laid acknowledging the timetable and proposing resuming discussion once other parties had been consulted	22/2/01
9	SY to invite the Treasurers of the parties represented in Westminster to visit the Commission to discuss the establishment of the Political Parties Panel	22/2/01
10	NM and GM to establish links with the Scottish and Welsh Boundary Commissions and SY/KS/RC to go to Northern Ireland for a similar purpose	8/3/01

Points Agreed

1. If the co-location with the LGCE proceeds in the Summer of 2001 the opening of the regional offices will be delayed to December 2001 due to operational need
2. Allocation of grants to meet start up costs agreed
3. 5 year plan and financial estimates agreed for submission to the Speaker's Committee subject to the proposed revisions being made and agreed by SY
4. It was not appropriate to express an opinion on the draft codes for political party and constituency broadcasts until after the Commencement Order empowered the Commissioners to do so.
5. Commissioners will meet at 10 am on 12/2/01 break for the press launch at 11.30 am and then reconvene.
6. RC will join the Commissioners on the platform and Commission staff will be involved
7. The press release will be embargoed until the launch and include reference to the decisions laid including the establishment of regional offices and the allocation of grants to meet start up costs
8. The Speaker's Committee meeting on 14 February will be attended by SY, RC, PH and CA
9. Training sessions followed by formal receptions would be held in the regions

Date of the Next Meeting

10am Monday 12 February 2001

Meeting of the Commissioners – 29 January 2001

Time: 12.30pm

Location: Board Room, Trevelyan House

Attendance: Sam Younger, Chairman
Pamela Gordon, Commissioner
Glyn Mathias, Commissioner
Sir Neil McIntosh, Commissioner
Karamjit Singh CBE, Commissioner
Roger Creedon, Chief Executive
Peter Hodgman, Deputy Chief Executive
Katie Kerr, Secretary
Rael Zackon, Head of Legal Services
Carla Andrewes, Strategic Planning and Finance Manager (for item 5)

1 Apologies:

1.1 Professor Graham Zellick, Commissioner

2 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 An explanatory note produced by the DTI regarding part IX of PPERA: political donations and expenditure by companies was circulated. The document highlights that the controls are triggered once the company holds an Annual General Meeting.

2.2 RC stated that he had started regular meetings with the Elections Section at the Home Office and had been invited to join the working party on the next General Election organised by the Clerk of the Crown

2.3 Points Agreed Section should record that on 29 January 2001 the Commissioners designate agreed that regional offices should be established.

3 Progress report on establishing the Commission

3.1 Re-registration

3.1.1 The deadline for re-registration had now passed. RC has written to the 29 parties that had not transferred their registration detailing the implications for them and offering to try and get them on the register on 16/2/01 if they come back with the required details.

3.1.2 The list of parties that had transferred their registration was circulated.

3.1.3 The Commissioners asked that the record show their appreciation for the work undertaken by staff in contact with the parties which is important in establishing the Commission as a helpful organisation.

3.1.4 Accounting Unit addresses will be available on the public register so RC has written to parties to give them the opportunity to change their accounting unit addresses to avoid publishing private addresses.

3.2 Recruitment

3.2.1 The current recruitment schedule was circulated.

3.3 IT

3.3.1 KS reported that the IT project board met weekly. All will be in place for 16/2/01 although improvements will be made later e.g. navigation and search of the website.

3.3.2 RC will write to the parties with copies of their entries and explain what information appears on the public register and how the website will function including the aspirations

3.4 Proposed relocation and merger with LGCE

3.4.1 PG reported that on 26/1/01 the Project board had met and to discuss the possible co-location and merger of the Electoral Commission and the Local Government Commission for England. There is Ministerial support for the proposals at the DETR and Home Office.

3.4.2 The merger is provisionally planned for 1/4/02 and the DETR and LGCE officials are working on the transfer documents

3.4.3 The relocation is provisionally planned to occur between late June and early September this year i.e. in between the dates of a possible general election and prior to LGCE starting the reviews of the Metropolitan Districts

3.4.4 RC and Barbara Stephens, CEO of LGCE will meet on 31/1/01 to discuss the financial assumptions relating to the proposals.

3.4.5 PH is the project manager and the LGCE have seconded Patricia Pena full-time to the project. A project initiation document will be developed from that drafted and an option appraisal completed.

3.4.6 The Commissioners expressed their thanks to the staff for the work undertaken on this project

3.4.7 PG briefly outlined the functions of the LGCE and it was agreed that a representative from the LGCE would be invited to give a presentation about the LGCE's role at the Commissioners' meeting on 8/3/01.

3.4.8 Commissioners agreed that were relocation with the LGCE to occur as proposed it may be advisable to let the date for opening the regional offices to slip to December 2001 on the grounds of operational need.

3.5 Commencement Timetable

3.5.1 Commencement order was laid 30/1/01 details as in the extract of Hansard attached.

3.5.2 The Home Office did not follow the Commission's advice to delay Part 1 S12 of PPERA relating to 'Policy development grants' until 1/7/01. The section will come into force on 16/2/01 with a view to grants being available from 1/4/01.

3.5.3 Secretary's note: the Commencement order did not follow the commencement timetable outlined at the meeting in respect of party political broadcasts but set 16/2/01 for S11 when the broadcasters must have regard to the Commission's view and 16/3/01 as the commencement date for S144 that refers to the repeal of S93 of the RPA, 1983.

4 Grants to meet start up costs (EC7/2001)

- 4.1 Additional tables (Annex D and Annex E) were circulated.
- 4.2 The final sentence of Paragraph 8 of EC7/2001 should read ‘The electorate to the Scottish Parliament is 8.6% of the UK total, whereas that for Wales is 5.0% and Northern Ireland is 2.9%. Annex D reflected a rate for parties represented in the devolved legislatures based on voter percentage i.e. £3000 for Scotland, £2000 for Wales and £1000 for Northern Ireland. The Commissioners decided that this approach should not be pursued as it was inconsistent with that taken elsewhere in the calculation that was principally based on voter turnout to which no alternative was proposed during the consultation process.
- 4.3 Annex E reflects a flat rate allocation of £1000 in respect of representation in Westminster as well as that previously proposed for representation in the devolved legislatures (£1000 for each legislature) and at local level (£500) in addition to the £500 available to all registered parties. The other change was that the all parties with seats were included in the equation of share on the basis their vote allocation. The Commissioners accepted that this addressed some of the concerns raised by parties during the consultation process and agreed this method of allocation.
- 4.4 PH agreed to have the figures relating to vote allocation of the parties included in the share of the vote allocation for the first time checked and sourced.
- 4.5 RC undertook to write to the parties regarding the mechanism for the allocation of grants and to make the information available on the website.

5 Commission expenditure for the period 2001/2 and the 5 year plan (EC8/2001)

- 5.1 Andrew Kennon, Clerk to the Speaker’s Committee stated the draft was suitable for the initial submission and that duplications between the plan and the financial estimates are necessitated by the legislation. HMT have not commented on the draft sent to them and AK advised that this should be stated in the covering letter to the Committee.
- 5.2 The estimates are in Resource Accounting and Budgeting terms so figures are included for factors such as depreciation.
- 5.3 The proposed merger with the LGCE affects the financial estimates and because the Commission is a new organisation there are uncertainties e.g. work- flow cannot be accurately anticipated. The uncertainties justify revisiting the plan and estimates in July 2001 and if necessary requesting a supplementary. AK agreed that the uncertainties should be emphasised in the Chairman’s preface which would be added on 30/1/01.
- 5.4 Commissioners’ financial liability will be checked
- 5.5 The Commissioners stated the draft was impressive and their specific comments noted. The draft was agreed subject to the revisions being made and run passed SY.

6 Progress on Transfer of Registrations (EC9/2001)

- 6.1 Covered in 3.1

7 Guidance on Political Party and Constituency Broadcasts (EC10/2001)

- 7.1 Commission not empowered to express a view prior to commencement. SY to write after the Commencement Order has been laid (30/1/01) acknowledging the commencement timetable and propose resuming discussions when the other parties have been consulted. It was agreed

that it would be inappropriate to appear to approve the drafts at this time.

- 7.2 Broadcasting was identified as an area that may be included in the Electoral Commission's report on an election.

8 Arrangements for the press launch

- 8.1 The Commissioners' meeting will commence at 10am and reconvene after the press launch.
- 8.2 Commission staff will be involved and RC is to be on the platform with the Commissioners
- 8.3 The full press release will be embargoed until the launch and will include indications of the decisions made including the regional offices and the allocation of grants to meet start up costs

9 Any other business

- 9.1 The Speaker's Committee meeting on 14/2/01 will be attended by SY, RC, PH and CA.
- 9.2 The Electoral Commission has been asked to call the meeting of the Political Parties Panel in March and devise the agenda. The party treasurers will nominate the membership of the panel. SY to invite Treasurers to discuss this with the Commissioners on 22/2/01
- 9.3 Attendance at the meeting of Boundary Commissioners in Edinburgh on 13/2/01 is to build relationships and try not to be seen as a threat. NM and GM to follow up and make links in Scotland and Wales. SY/KS/RC to go to Northern Ireland for a similar purpose.
- 9.4 It was agreed that events would be held in the regions that would have an educational session followed by a reception

10 Date of the next meeting

- 10.1 10am Monday 12 February 2001, the meeting will break for the press launch at 11.30am including lunch

Action Points from the meeting 18.11.00

1	SY to establish contacts with the new Chairmen of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland and for Wales	Once formally appointed	Meeting 13/2/01 Edinburgh
8	RC to provide progress report on preparation for a May General Election for the next meeting	18.12.00	Deferred to 22.2.01
11	RC to arrange for the production of a powerpoint presentation for Commissioners to use when speaking at conferences and meetings	18.12.00	Completed
12	Anne Hinds to arrange press conference and press release	12.2.01 (date changed)	On-going

Action Points from meeting on 18.12.00

7	Comments on the Control and Reporting of Donations documentation to RC/PH. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RC/PH to expand fundraising dinner example to include need to check the purchaser is a permissible donor RC to review with DTI and LGA how to inform Companies and Independents respectively of the requirements RC/PH to review the order of the questions	Comments prior to 11/1/01, document published 2/01	On-going
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NM to e-mail RC comments regarding guidance on campaign expenditure by mid January. RC to consult parties on the guidance on campaign expenditure prior to Christmas RC to report back to Commissioners with views of the parties on assistance grants 	29.1.00	On-going letters consulting the parties sent 20/12/01
9	Guidance on Political Party Broadcasts and Constituency broadcasts to be considered at the Commissioners meeting on 29.1.01	29.1.01	Completed

Action Points from meeting on 11.1.01

1	PH to provide paper on allocation of grants to meet start up costs for a formal decision to be made taking into account the comments made by the political parties following the consultation exercise	29.1.01	Completed
2	RC/PH to liaise with CBI, IoD and LGA Independent Group to provide articles for in house publications to raise awareness of the Commission and the control and reporting of donations	16.2.01	On-going
3	GM to provide guidance to the Commissioners on handling media enquiries at the next meeting	29.1.01	12/2/01
4	Budget – PH/CA to prepare a paper detailing the Commission's expenditure for the period 1.12.00-31.3.01 including any prediction of an over or under spend	12.2.01	EC11/01
5	RC to respond to the Home Office letter of 14.12.00 seeking comments on implementation and to advise the Home Office that commencement of S12 (policy development grants) should be deferred to 1.7.01	12.2.01	Completed
6	Campaign Expenditure – RC to advise parties that no code could be in place for a Spring General Election due to lack of time but consultation with the Political Parties should commence before this date	On-going	On-going
7	RC to arrange for a procedure for staff to follow when dealing with allegations to be drafted	12.2.01	Deferred to 22/2/01
8	RC to expand current guide (Q&A) for parties in particular with	12.2.01	On-going

	regard to notional expenditure		
9	Regional Offices – RC/KK to review staffing requirement specifically look to make Head of Regional Office a PB3 post	12.2.01	EC12/01
10	PH to continue to refine draft 5 year plan for the Speaker's Committee taking account of comments raised during the meeting and to include details of the expenditure for the period 2001/2	29.1.01	Completed
11	RC to establish regular liaison meetings with the Home Office Elections Section and contacts with other interested bodies including those within the devolved legislatures	29.1.01	Completed
12	Common Accounting Year – PH to produce paper including recommendation for the next formal meeting	12.2.01	Deferred to 22/2/01
13	SY to ask the Speaker to host the reception in his official residence and proposals for the invitation list to be sent to Katie Kerr	12.2.01	SY meeting Speaker on 8/2/01
14	Key messages (document circulated) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners to comment to SY • SY to incorporate reference to representation within the regions 	29.1.01	Completed