

Confirmed on 14 April 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 21 March 2005, in London

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

In attendance: Peter wardle (PW)
Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Angela Salt (AS)
Kate Sullivan (KBS)
Rael Zackon (RZ)
Tom Hawthorn (TH)
Mark Stratton (MS)
Tim Atkinson (TA)

1. Foundation model of voting (EC55/05)

- 1.1 TH presented the report, which provided a draft outline of the final document. Two particular issues were highlighted:
- Where postal voting fitted into the vision
 - Administrative aspects, particularly the verification of identity
- 1.2 The Commissioners restated the vision of multi-channel voting which enabled both security and secrecy. The starting point should be that everyone has the right to vote in secrecy. Modernisation adds convenient channels of voting which reflect modern lifestyles. The foundation would remain the polling station and any departure from voting at a polling station should be a positive choice for the voter. The legislation had not changed over many years; the process had to move forward while maintaining voter confidence.
- 1.3 PW suggested that the report should follow the process through from registration, identifying where the Commission had already made recommendations to address the concerns of security. The Commissioners also considered the impact of:
- Postal voting on demand
 - Remote electronic voting channels

- New election offences
 - Individual registration
 - Media interest in criticism of postal voting
 - The cost of technological solutions
 - Review of the role of returning officers and electoral registration officers/local authorities
- 1.4 TH proposed bringing to Commissioners a further draft which followed the voting process, and took account of the issues raised in the discussion. SY agreed to draft the opening statement which would give a sense of how the future model would look. The Commissioners agreed to discuss the draft again at the meeting on 14 April.
- 1.5 **The Commissioners reviewed the outline of the document, and requested that a further draft be prepared for consideration at the next meeting, to take account of the matters raised in the discussion.**

2. Registration of party names (EC56/05)

- 2.1 SY advised that the Commission had received four applications for registration of party names, which had to be determined by 31 March 2005, and therefore could not be dealt with at the next meeting. The applications were for:

- Labour Party of Northern Ireland
- Vote for a Change
- Protest Vote Party
- Christian Party

2.2 *Vote for a Change and Protest Vote parties:*

The Commissioners were recommended to approve these two applications. There were currently no names on the register which could be confused with these applications.

2.3 *Christian Party:*

This was an application to change the name of a party currently registered as Operation Christian Vote. The Commissioners considered that the proposed name would be liable to be confused with the Christian Democratic Party, and therefore that the application should be refused under section 28(4)(a)(ii) of PPERA.

2.4 *Labour Party of Northern Ireland:*

The Commissioners noted that this application was for registration on the Northern Ireland register. They noted that the Labour Party was not

registered in Northern Ireland. The Commissioners asked for further legal advice on the application of section 28 (4)(a) (i) and (ii) to this application, to be e-mailed to Commissioners before 25 March.

The Commissioners agreed to endeavour to make a decision by 30 March at the latest. It was also proposed that if the application was approved, that the Labour Party should be advised as a matter of courtesy after the registration.

2.5 The Commissioners agreed to:

- i) approve the application for registration of Vote for a Change**
- ii) approve the application for registration of the Protest Vote Party**
- iii) refuse the application for registration of the Christian Party on the ground that the registration of the name would be likely to result in electors confusing the party with another party on the register, under section 28(4)(a)(ii) of PPERA.**
- iv) request further legal advice in respect of the application for registration of the Labour Party of Northern Ireland**