

Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 8 May 2008, London

- Present: Sam Younger (SY) Chair
Max Caller (MC)
Henrietta Campbell (HC)
Ian Kelsall (IK)
John McCormick (JMcC)
Karamjit Singh (KS)
- In attendance: Peter Wardle (PW)
Lisa Klein (LK)
Stephen Rooney (SR)
Andrew Scallan (AS)
Bob Posner (BP)
Vera Markos (VM)
Katy Bere (KB) – Item 5
Caroline Evans (CE) Item 7
Tom Hawthorn (TH) – Items 1 & 5
Aileen Keynes (AK) – Item 7
Andy O’Neil (AO’N) – Item 3
Karen Quaintmere (KQ) – Items 1 & 5

1 Minutes (EC36/08)

The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2008 (EC44/08) subject to removal of paragraphs 5.7 and 5.8.

It was noted that the Corporate Plan 2008-09 – 2012-13 was laid in Parliament on 7 May 2008.

- 1.2 With regard to agenda item 1.3 (Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers) AS reported that the letter to the leaders of the four Councils (Runnymede, Amber Valley, Monmouthshire and Stratford) who had failed to respond to the request for data would be sent out week commencing 12 May 2008. TH said that EROs had been informed that the consultation paper outlining the draft performance standards for EROs was now on the website
- 1.3 With regard to agenda item 6 (Update on the structure of electoral administration in the UK) AS reported that discussions were proceeding as planned to meet the 23 May deadline for receiving written or verbal comments, as highlighted in the March 2008 issues paper. SY noted

the opportunity on 10 June 2008 for Commissioners to discuss the project with David Monks, Chairman, SOLACE Electoral Matters Panel, and John Turner, Chief Executive, Association of Electoral Administrators.

- 1.4 With regard to agenda item 4.3 (White Paper) LK reported that meetings had been held on 7 and 8 May with Ministry of Justice (MoJ) officials. The MoJ anticipated publication of the White Paper mid-May. Further meetings had been planned.

2 Deputy Commissioner annual fee increase 2007- 08 (EC45/08)

- 2.1 VM requested approval for an increase of 2.4% in the daily fee rate for Deputy Commissioners for 2007/08 financial year and recommended an approach for the future. A letter would be sent to the Deputy Commissioners outlining the agreed increase.
- 2.2 It was noted that the Deputy Commissioners had expressed concern regarding their travel claims, particularly mileage rates. VM was asked to check statutory mileage rates and consider whether changes were possible/desirable in light of the Deputy Commissioners' high anticipated travel for 2008/09.
- 2.3 The Commission agreed to the daily fee rate increase and to the policy that Deputy Commissioners, until further notice, receive a year on year pay increase in line with provision for Commissioner fee increases.

3 Decoupling the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections (EC46/08)

- 3.1 AO'N presented a background briefing on the reasons for decoupling the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections and outlined the proposed response to the four options presented in the consultation paper.
- 3.2 The Commission discussed the merits of each option and recommended that the decoupling of the local government and Scottish Parliamentary elections be achieved by the use of two five-year terms to reach a point where local government elections are held halfway through the term of the Scottish Parliament. Final sign-off of the formal response was delegated to JMcC.

4. PEF update (EC47/08)

- 4.1 The Commission received an update from LK on PEF activities and performance during the month of April 2008.
- 4.1 LK reported that the following two staff appointments had been made within PEF: Head of Guidance and Policy and Head of Enforcement.
- 4.3 The Commission welcomed the monthly update and requested continued monthly reporting for May and June.

5. 1 May 2008 – post-election update

- 5.1 TH provided an update on the elections which took place on 1 May in England, Wales and London.
- 5.2 TH reported that three draft reports were being produced on the local elections in Wales, the local elections in England, the GLA and London Mayoral elections, and that these reports would reflect a further 'report card' on the administration of the elections.
- 5.3 The draft election reports for England, Wales and London would be brought to the Commission meeting on 26 June for sign off in order to be laid before parliamentary summer recess.

6. Individual electoral registration (FIO52/08)

- 6.1 AS noted that the purpose of the paper was to present initial thoughts for discussion as to how individual electoral registration could be implemented in Great Britain, and welcomed comments from Commissioners.
- 6.2 The Commission agreed that they were still committed to collect identifiers in the voting process and confirmed a preference for these identifiers to be signature, date of birth and National Insurance Number.
- 6.3 SY reported that a meeting was organised with the Lord Chancellor for week commencing 12 May 2008 (later changed to 16 June) to discuss individual electoral registration.

7. International Stakeholder Strategy - update (EC32/08)

- 7.1 SR outlined the key elements of the international strategy and updated the Commission on the activities in the international field over the past year.

- 7.2 The Commission welcomed the update and noted the activities reported.
- 7.3 The Commission considered the proposed revision of Objective 1 and agreed that this should be expressed more broadly to use international experience to inform and improve UK electoral processes and the regulation of party and election finance.
- 7.4 The Commission requested that a guide to key international websites be forwarded to them.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Release of Electoral data – Scotland (verbal update) – EC49/08

BP presented a briefing paper which informed Commissioners that contrary to the advice of the Commission the Scotland Office had published certain statistical electoral data relating to the May 2007 elections to the Scottish Parliament.