

Draft as at 6 May 2003

## **MINUTES OF THE PRIVATE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSIONERS HELD ON 28 APRIL 2003**

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

In attendance: Roger Creedon (RC)  
Jacqui Dixon (JD)

### **1. Financial Monitoring 2003 – 4**

- 1.1 RC presented the report. The aim was to have in place a more robust monitoring and reporting system. Managers would receive monthly reports; the report proposed that higher level information reports, including an explanation of the figures, be provided to Commissioners. More detailed information would be available on the intranet.
- 1.2 SY stated that Commissioners needed to have access to detailed information to be confident of answering questions on the budget. The text and explanation should highlight any areas of difficulty. RC indicated that it was intended to highlight budgetary issues across corporate aims, not across staffing divisions.
- 1.3 NM stated that significant progress had been made in financial management, and that the Internal Auditor and the NAO were impressed by this. RC and RG were thanked for their efforts. NM also referred to the role of the Audit Committee in this area.
- 1.4 The Commissioners asked that Audit Committee papers should be sent to them for information. It was also proposed that that the six-month budget monitoring report should be available for the Business Planning meeting in October 2003.
- 1.5 **The Commissioners agreed the recommendations.**

### **2. Other matters**

- 2.1 The Commissioners discussed the following additional matters:
  - 2.1.2 The Treasury Select Committee had published a report on the Euro, which included a reference to legislation to enable the Electoral Commission to provide public information.

- 2.1.3 SY thanked GZ and KS for attending the dinner with representatives of the ACEEEO. The organisation is planning to hold its annual conference in London in the autumn of 2003. The Commission would assist in finding venues and speakers, and possibly host a reception for the delegates.
- 2.1.4 SY referred to a letter received from the EONI concerning the requirement to register each year with a signature, and the possible loss of registered voters. The Commissioners agreed that it was premature to consider recommending changes to new legislation at this stage; this matter should be considered after the next canvas.
- 2.1.5 KS raised the issue of descriptions for independent candidates, which had implications for the regulatory framework. This had been raised as part of the discussion on the review of PPERA. PG expressed concern that any proposal on regulating independent candidates should not run counter to the recommendations in the Nominations Review. It was suggested that candidates wishing to use a six-word description should be able to register with the Returning Officer. GM highlighted the fact that the proposal for a six-word description did not allow for translation into Welsh.

It was agreed that SY and RC would look again at the text of the review documents, in the light of this discussion.

- 2.2 SY reported on the following planned events:

9 May: wash up session on local authority pilots, with lunchtime reception

3 June: seminars on Electoral Law Reforms, to be held simultaneously in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff. The proposed format would be a seminar from 11am to 12.30pm for Returning Officers, electoral administrators and key stakeholders, followed by a presentation to the media and a lunchtime reception.

- 2.3 Press lines would be provided for Commissioners observing elections on 1 May.
- 2.4 NM and GM reported very positive feedback on the advertising campaign for the elections in Scotland and Wales on 1 May.
- 2.5 Commissioners asked for copies of the House of Lords judgement in the Pro-Life case against the BBC to be circulated.
- 2.6 The Commissioners discussed issues relating to media briefings and accessing press cuttings. These matters would be raised with MPA.