

## Minutes of the Elections and Registration Working Group

9 March 2010

Mothers' Union Building, 24 Tufton Street, London SW1P  
3RB

**Present:** Robert Connolly (Birmingham City Council)  
Lindsay Dixon (Sunderland City Council)  
Debra Harrod (Poole Borough Council)  
Keith Hathaway (GLRO)  
Ailsa Irvine (Electoral Commission)  
Laura Lock (South Cambridgeshire District Council)  
Glynne Morgan (Pembrokeshire County Council)  
Pat Parker (Electoral Commission)  
Kath Richards (Southampton City Council) & AEA

**In attendance:** *Items 1 - 3:* James Pack (Electoral Commission)  
*Items 2 & 3:* Paul Docker and Paul Brunton (Ministry of  
Justice)  
*Items 2 - 7:* Karen Quaintmere (Electoral Commission)  
*Items 4 - 7:* Jennifer Martin Kohlmorgen (Electoral  
Commission)  
*Items 6 and 7:* Pronoy Bose, Gemma Rosenblatt and Phil  
Thompson (Electoral Commission)

**Apologies:** Jill Lewis (Manchester City Council)  
Alex Meek/Bill Gillatt (Leeds City Council)  
Alison Scott (Leicester City Council)  
John Owen (AEA)  
Alex Thomson (City of Edinburgh Council)

### 1 Welcome and apologies

1.1 Ailsa Irvine thanked members for their attendance and gave a brief overview of the key issues to be covered on the agenda. In particular, as the meeting would be the last before the elections, she suggested a session focussing on the 'what ifs...' which would assist with the development of a FAQs document, which would be shared with the group.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Jill Lewis, Alex Meek and Bill Gillatt, John Owen, Alison Scott and Alex Thomson. John Turner had advised that Kath Richards would be representing the AEA in John Owen's absence.

1.3 Ailsa also explained that there had been representations from the London AEA branch about their concern that a London practitioner was not included on the working group. This concern had been discussed with the RRO for London, Barry Quirk, who has been asked to nominate a London practitioner.

## 2 Update from MoJ

2.1 Supplier issues: Paul Brunton circulated round the table the minutes of this meeting and Paul Brunton stated that he would circulate an electronic copy after the working group meeting. He added that there appeared to be no outstanding issues. It was agreed by the group that future suppliers group meetings should be coordinated with working group meetings. There was a suggestion that separate forums for software suppliers and printers may be more appropriate, but it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to separate the issues affecting the software suppliers and the printers.

2.2 Service voters and Afghanistan – Paul Docker provided an update on the process, and informed the group that a newsflash on this had now been distributed. He further added that it had been agreed by the Commission that James Pack would act as intermediary to pass on messages to Andrew Colver at Rushmoor through the Commission's Devolved and English offices. Paul recognised the need for all authorities creating a generic e-mail box (for example, elections@authority) which could be used for any future correspondence of a similar nature to the postal vote initiative.

2.3 Fees & Charges – Paul Docker advised that the Order was awaiting signature and that this and the accompanying guidance would be with (A)ROs shortly.

2.4 Indemnities – Paul Brunton confirmed that the MoJ's Chief Accounting Officer had agreed to provide Acting Returning Officers with a specific indemnity to supplement the insurance policies which had been arranged locally for the next UK Parliamentary election. However, it was noted that the indemnity would need to be agreed with Treasury, signed by the Treasury and laid before Parliament for 14 sitting days before it could go "live".

2.5 Funding – Laura Lock asked about the second tranche of money to deal with the implementation of electoral registration data standards and whether it would be paid during the current financial year. Paul Docker agreed to follow this up with David Canning.

## 3. Election issues

3.1 Overnight counting – The amendment to the CRaG bill regarding the timing of counts at UK Parliamentary elections was discussed. In the event that the bill becomes law, the Commission will be required to provide

guidance for (A)ROs on the new duty. It was noted that the Commission was working on developing draft guidance on this, and hoped to be in a position to share this with the ECG at their meeting on 11 March.

3.2 Post election issues - Glynne Morgan suggested that it would be helpful if further guidance could be provided regarding post-election activities such as the Commission's data collection activities and retention and inspection of candidates' election expenses. It was agreed that the Commission would develop a checklist for these purposes, along the same lines as the nominations checklists that had previously been developed.

3.3 Combination issues paper – although it was recognised that there had been some issues regarding the timeliness of the issue of the paper, the working group members reported back that the feedback they had received on the paper was generally positive.

3.4 Nomination and other forms – Glynne Morgan provided some supplementary template forms in the same format as those already on the Commission's website for candidates/agents to use for notifying the details of polling and counting agents, etc. Ailsa agreed that these would be uploaded to the website by the end of the week, together with a form for candidates/agents to use for requesting a copy of the register. Lindsay Dixon offered to provide Sunderland's form as an example.

3.5 Commission announcement circular – Ailsa explained that a circular was being drafted which would be issued as soon as the UKPGE was announced, which would contain the election timetable, and would summarise the services available from the Commission during the election period, as well as other information on the Commission's activities. The circular would also expand on the arrangements for collecting post election data.

#### 4. Election reporting

4.1 Ailsa provided a brief overview of the Commission's planned approach to election reporting, highlighting that a high level report would be published in mid-July prior to parliamentary summer recess, which would be followed by themed papers and other products later in the year.

#### 5. Being prepared – the 'what ifs.....'

5.1 The group discussed what types of issues and problems might arise in the immediate run up to and during the forthcoming elections, and began to explore what the appropriate responses to these may be. It was agreed that the outcomes of this discussion would be captured in a document that Pat Parker would produce, which would take the form of FAQs, and that this would be circulated to the group as soon as it was complete.

5.2 The working group agreed to flag to the Commission any issues that appeared to be widespread across their regions so that they could be picked up at an early stage, and responded to as appropriate. It was noted that in the event of any widespread problem arising in response to which the

Commission determined that it was necessary to issue emergency guidance by circular, the working group would be sent a copy of this guidance at the same time as it was being sent out by circular, which they would then seek to highlight within their electoral regions as far as is practicable.

## 6. Registration research and ERO performance standards reports

6.1 Gemma Rosenblatt, Pronoy Bose and Phil Thompson from the Commission attended the meeting to provide an overview of the registration research and ERO performance standards reports that were issued by the Commission in the previous week. It was agreed that the working group would focus on registration issues at its July meeting, with a view to considering how the recommendations and lessons learned from these reports could be taken forward.

6.2 The issues with the recent home movers' campaign were raised. The working group offered to provide input into the Commission's future campaigns planning. It was noted that feedback would be provided to administrators on the lessons learned from this year's home movers' campaigns in due course.

## 7. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 9 June – Boothroyd meeting room at Trevelyan House.