

Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 13 March 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)
Clare Ettinghausen (CE)
Carolyn Hughes (CH)
Lisa Klein (LK)
Stephen Rooney (SR)
Andrew Scallan (AS)
Bob Posner (BP)
Vera Markos (VM)

Pronoy Bose (PB) – Item 3
Tom Hawthorn (TH) – Items 3 & 4
Kate Sullivan (KS) – Item 4
Andy O'Neill (AO'N) – Item 5
Aileen Keyes (AK) – Item 6
Benjamin King (BK) – Item 6

1 **Minutes (EC23/08)**

- 1.1 The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2008 (EC33/08).
- 1.2 The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2008 (EC23/08).
- 1.3 With regard to agenda Item 5 LK noted that the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) had responded to issues raised by the Commission concerning draft legislation on loans to political parties in Northern Ireland. The Commission was satisfied with the response. LK anticipated the Orders would commence on 1 July 2008. LK further noted that a training seminar for political parties on loans would be delivered at the Commission's Belfast office on 14 March 2008.

- 1.4 The Commission agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2008 (EC34/08).

2 Corporate Plan 2008-9 to 2012-13 and Estimate 2008-9 (EC24/08)

- 2.1 CH and PW presented the Corporate Plan 2008-9 to 2012-13 and Estimate for 2008-9 sign off. On the Corporate Plan PW noted that in the discussion of the Corporate Plan at the Speaker's Committee on 25 February 2008 changes had been requested to Objective 5 'Fair boundary arrangements for elections' by the DCLG.
- 2.2 Following a discussion of the Corporate Plan the Commission proposed a few final changes, notably an additional 'key activity' under objective 2 (electoral registration), which referred to the Commission's continuing commitment to promoting the introduction of individual registration in Great Britain.
- 2.3 CH presented the financial context for the five year Corporate Plan and the 12 month estimate. The Commission welcomed the presentation on the Estimate and requested a briefing and discussion on wider corporate services issues (since scheduled for April meeting).

3 Consultation on performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers (EC25/08)

- 3.1 TH presented the Consultation paper on a range of draft performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers. TH noted the intention to launch the consultation by end March 2008 and that further events would be held during the consultation period.
- 3.2 The Commission approved the Consultation paper subject to drafting amendments and requested that a pilot of the proposed standards be undertaken as part of the consultation.

4 The structure of electoral administration in the UK (EC31/08)

- 4.1 AS provided an update of the structure of the Electoral Administration project and proposed that a consultation paper would be circulated to the Commission for comment on 14 March.
- 4.2 The Commission discussed the proposed timetable and opportunities for stakeholder meetings.
- 4.3 The Commission agreed arrangements for reviewing the paper in time to meet the proposed publication timetable; emphasised that it was a discussion paper rather than a formal consultation document; and requested a further update at the Commission's meeting in April.

5 Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation paper on a Local Healthcare Bill (EC26/08)

- 5.1 AO'N presented a draft response to the Scottish Government's Consultation paper on a Local Healthcare Bill.
- 5.2 The Commission agreed to respond to the consultation via a letter from AO'N, setting its response in the context that the proposed elections might be run on a statutory basis by Returning Officers and EROs. The Commission delegated sign off of the revised response to PW.

6 Party election broadcasts (1 May elections) – response to the proposed allocations by the BBC (EC27/08)

- 6.1 SR presented the response to proposals from the BBC for the allocation of party election broadcasts for local elections in England and Wales and London Mayoral/GLA elections on 1 May 2008.
- 6.2 The Commission agreed the proposed criteria, broadcast allocations and election guidelines. The Commission further agreed to write to the licensed public service channels asking for information about their allocation proposals.
- 6.3 The Commission agreed to schedule a wider discussion on broadcasting issues in due course.

7 PEF cases

- 7.1 The Commission received an update from LK on the current investigations.

8 Reform of governance and staffing of the Electoral Commission (EC28/08)

- 8.1 CE and PW presented an outline of an approach to any proposal for the reform of governance and staffing of the Electoral Commission.
- 8.2 The Commission welcomed the paper and agreed to reconsider the matter, following further thinking, in due course.

9 Update on party finance white paper

- 9.1 The Commission received a verbal update from LK and PW.