

The Electoral Commission

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer
Convener of the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

28 September 2023

Dear Presiding Officer

Re: Supplementary Estimate 2023/24

I am writing to advise of several financial pressures that have arisen in 2023/24 and to request an additional **£73,400** from the Scottish Parliament for this year, via the supplementary process to meet the following two pressures.

Firstly, as you will be aware, the Electoral Commission was targeted by hostile actors via a sophisticated cyber-attack. This was identified in October 2022 and announced publicly in August 2023. Some additional costs associated with managing the systems to improve security transferring systems offsite to the cloud were identified in the budget bids for 2023/24 at £312,000, which was requested via the main bid from the UK Parliament. This, however, was not the only cost directly attributable to the increases in our cyber-security and in 2023/24, we will incur running costs of a further £308,000. Of this sum, we are seeking 8% contribution being **£24,600** from the Scottish Parliament, with the remainder being 5% from the Senedd and 87% from the UK Parliament.

By way of context the Commission was not the only national infrastructure organisation targeted, as we are aware of targets as diverse as the Royal Mail, the Criminal Records Office (ACRO), and the Metropolitan Police, thus highlighting the vulnerability of public sector bodies to motivated attackers and the extreme sensitivity of the data they hold. We must therefore accept future steps to reduce the risks of ransomware, third-party attacks and social engineering being successfully used to breach critical systems.


Secondly, the pay awards for 2023 have been higher than the level expected when we submitted our original estimate. The Commission has aligned the pay settlement to the wider Civil Service that permitted average pay awards up to 4.5% with further flexibility to make awards up to an additional 0.5%, targeted at lower pay bands. In addition to this, for 2023/24, we aligned ourselves to the Pay Remit Guidance to make a fixed non-consolidated payment of £1,500 per full-time employee for those in delegated grades, subject to eligibility. The Commission originally had budgeted for 4% pay settlement (£553,000), but the combined effect of the above is £1,014,000. The effect on the

supplementary budget bid from the Scottish Parliament is circa 10.6% of this sum being **£48,800**.

Please note the budget set for 2023/24 did not factor further contingency sums that could be used to reduce the pressure of the cyber-attack driven changes or the pay award, and other initiatives to reduce costs are being used to offset other pressures including changes to enhance capability.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank you and the Committee for your on-going support for the Commission's activities in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun McNally', written in a cursive style.

Shaun McNally CBE

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer, Electoral Commission