



**Cabinet Office Elections Policy and Co-ordination Group**

**14<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 13.45-15.00 Tuesday 10 September 2013  
The Electoral Commission, 3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ**

**Attendees**

**UK Government**

**Paul Docker** Head of Electoral Administration, (Cabinet Office) (Chair)  
**Matt Carey** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office)  
**Eileen Vagg** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office)  
**Sammy Amareh** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office)  
**Ian Barber** Department for Communities and Local Government  
**Karen McNeill** Northern Ireland Office  
**Roddy Angus** Scotland Office  
**Ady Garrett** HMRC (for item 8)  
**Maggie Anderson** HMRC (for item 8)  
**David Reid** DWP (for Item 8)

**Welsh Government**

**Hugh Rawlings (HR)** Director, Constitutional Affairs and Inter-Governmental Relations, Department for the First Minister and Cabinet, Welsh Government

**Regional Returning Officers (and/or representatives)**

**Kate Brown (KB)** Manchester City Council (North West Region)  
**Robert Connelly (RC)** Birmingham City Council (West Midlands Region)  
**David Cook (DC)** RRO East Midlands Region  
**Ann Coronel (AC)** Chelmsford City Council (Eastern Region)  
**Lindsey Dixon (LD)** Sunderland City Council (North East Region)  
**Mark Heath (MH)** RRO South East Region  
**Paul Morris (PM)** RRO South West Region  
**Steve Packham (SP)** RRO Eastern Region  
**Bryn Parry-Jones (BPJ)** RRO Wales  
**Mary Pitcaithly (MP)** RRO Scotland  
**Barry Quirk (BQ)** RRO London  
**Peter Gadsdon (PG)** Lewisham  
**Tom Riordan (TR)** RRO Yorkshire & the Humber  
**Graham Shields (GS)** RRO Northern Ireland

**Association of Electoral Administrators**

**Karen Quaintmere (KQ)** Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA)

## Electoral Commission

**Peter Wardle** Chief Executive  
**Andrew Scallen** Director of Electoral Administration  
**Tom Hawthorn** Head of Electoral Policy

### Apologies

**Sir Howard Bernstein** RRO North West Region  
**Joanne Roney** Wakefield Council (Yorkshire and the Humber Region)  
**Dave Smith** RRO North East Region (SOLACE representative)

### Minutes

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.
- 1.2 The issue of Access to Elected Office was discussed. CO confirmed that evaluation of the scheme would be for the Government Equalities Office (GEO) to undertake. GEO, CO and the Electoral Commission were in contact.

#### 2. European Parliamentary Elections

- 2.1 CO provided an update on the legislation for the European Elections, confirming that both the order designating the RROs and the date of Poll order had been made. The European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations have been laid before Parliament. The Regulations were set to be debated in House of Commons Committee on 12 September and would be considered by the House of Lords on 15 October. Subject to Parliamentary approval, CO expected the Regulations to be made into law sometime soon after 15 October. **Post-meeting note – the Regulations have been approved by both Houses of Parliament. They will now be sent to Minister to be made formally.**
- 2.2 DCLG confirmed that the order for moving the date of the 2014 Local elections had completed its progress through both Houses of Parliament. **Post meeting note -the Order has been signed by the Minister and is now in force.**
- 2.4 Updates to the conduct rules for other polls: CO confirmed that it was prioritising the updates to regulations for those polls scheduled or highly likely to take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014. It has prepared the Regulations for the European Elections and is now working on those for Neighbourhood Planning Referendums and for Mayoral elections. It is also working on the rules for local elections, local governance referendums and council tax referendums.

2.5 CO confirmed its intention to have the Fees and Charges Order for the 2014 European Elections in place six months in advance of the polls. CO confirmed that the calculations were based on electorate and postal voter data provided to it by local authorities. CO noted that the boundaries for the 2014 European elections in Scotland would differ from those used in 2009. BPJ queried what data-set had been used as the basis for the funding allocations for counting areas in Wales given that the 2009 European Parliamentary election was run on different boundaries. CO committed to check and report back. **Action: CO**

### **3 Revised RRO/LRO responsibilities**

3.1 The Group confirmed it was content with the roles as set out in the revised roles and responsibilities document. CO confirmed it would send out a final version setting out the roles and responsibilities. **Action CO.**

### **4 Co-ordination points referred to EPCG by the Working Group**

4.1 There was a clear consensus amongst the group for the ballot papers to be used at the 2014 European Parliamentary elections to be printed on white paper. CO presented the group with an informal example of a two-column version of the European ballot paper, submitted to it by a supplier. This was seen as a way to contain the overall length of the ballot paper, although it was noted that no such design had been user-tested for European Parliamentary elections. CO would confirm the legal position as to having a two column ballot paper. The Electoral Commission confirmed its guidance would include instruction on the folding of the ballot paper. There should be further discussion on contingencies and risk mitigation for candidate numbers and ballot papers at a future meeting. **Action: CO**

4.2 On the issue of regional and local counts (and in particular, count collation systems), the Electoral Commission confirmed it was giving the issue of verification at the European Elections further consideration and has referred it back to the Working Group. It hoped to publish guidance in October. The group would consider the Working Groups' recommendations at the next EPCG meeting. **Action: Working Group/ CO**

4.3 On the issue of engagement with party agents and dealing with requests for recounts, as consistency was needed across the regions, it was suggested that guidance, such as that made available at the 2011 referendum on the Parliamentary voting system was required. The group agreed that the matter should be referred to the Working Group and then brought back to EPCG. **Action: Working Group**

### **5 Funding**

5.1 CO updated the Group on the progress of its Funding Review and responses from the informal stakeholder consultation paper on proposed changes for the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. CO thanked RROs for providing the data held in each local authority on electorate sizes, number of postal voters, number of polling stations etc. The consultation received around 50 responses. Most responses had been positive towards the proposed changes, with Returning Officers believing that changing the funding allocation method to be

based on 2009 settlement amounts, and taking into account factors such as inflation and changes in the electorate population, should provide them with the right amount of funding for 2014. CO is working to have the Fees and Charges Order in place as early as possible in advance of the poll, subject to Ministerial agreement from both CO and Treasury Ministers. A further update will be given at the next meeting on 5 November. **Action: CO**

5.2 CO confirmed it had been asked to consider the option of RROs using Government procurement frameworks to procure services from suppliers. This was seen as a positive step to ensure services can be obtained readily. CO confirmed it would advise on this. **Action: CO**

## **6. PAYE online reporting and pension auto-enrolment for Returning Officers and Election staff**

6.1 HMRC gave a presentation on the implications of PAYE online reporting. There were some concerns raised and CO undertook to facilitate meetings between HMRC and electoral management software systems suppliers. MH agreed to take part in future discussions. **Action: CO**

6.2 DWP confirmed that it hoped to have comprehensive pension auto-enrolment by 2018 with the requirement phasing-in gradually before then. It was agreed that there needed to be further meetings between representatives from DWP, CO and RROs to explore further the implications of the policy. BPJ volunteered to attend. **Action: CO**

## **7. Any Other Business**

7.1 There was no AOB.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

8.1 The next meeting would be held on 5 November 2013.