



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

**15<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 13.00-14.30 Tuesday 5 November 2013  
Cabinet Office, 1 Horse Guards Road SW1A 2HQ**

**Attendees**

**UK Government**

**Alex Thomas** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office) (Chair)  
**Paul Docker** Head of Electoral Administration, (Cabinet Office)  
**Peter Richardson** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office)  
**Adam Shoosmith** Elections and Parliament Division, (Cabinet Office)  
**Fiona Willan** 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  
**Zoe Wilkinson** Home Office  
**Zakir Hussain** Home Office  
**Karen McNeill** Northern Ireland Office  
**Roddy Angus** Scotland Office

**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)**

**John Bennett (JB)** London GLA  
**Michelle Chard (MC)** 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)  
**Lindsay Dixon (LD)** Sunderland City Council (North East Region)  
**Ross Thompson (RT)** South East Region  
**Paul Morris (PM)** RRO South West Region  
**Steve Packham (SP)** RRO Eastern Region  
**Bryn Parry-Jones (BPJ)** RRO Wales  
**Peter Gadsdon (PG)** Lewisham (London Region)  
**Graham Shields (GS)** RRO Northern Ireland

**Association of Electoral Administrators**

**John Turner (JT)** Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA)

## **Electoral Commission**

**Peter Wardle (PW)** Chief Executive

**Andrew Scallen (AS)** Director of Electoral Administration

### **Apologies**

**Sir Howard Bernstein** RRO North West Region

**Tom Hawthorn** Head of Electoral Policy Electoral Commission

**Steven Hughes** RRO West Midlands Region

**Barry Quirk** RRO London

**Mary Pitcaithly** RRO Scotland

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

**Tom Riordan** RRO Yorkshire & the Humber

**Joanne Roney** Wakefield Council (Yorkshire and the Humber Region)

**Paul Rowsell** DCLG

**Dave Smith** RRO North East Region (SOLACE representative)

### **Minister for Cities and the Constitution**

#### **1. Welcome, Introductions and remarks from the Minister, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**

1.1 The Minister thanked all those present for their continued support in delivering well run elections. He was particularly appreciative of the work being done, not only in preparation for the forthcoming European and local elections, but also in preparation for the transition to IER. He noted that he hoped to attend these meetings from time to time.

### **Minutes**

#### **2. Minutes of previous meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2.2 The Group confirmed it was content with the roles as set out in the final version of the revised roles and responsibilities document, recently sent out by Cabinet Office (CO).

#### **3. European Parliamentary Elections**

##### **(i) legislation**

3.1 CO provided an update on the legislation for the European Parliamentary elections, (EP), confirming that the regulations had been made and were signed by the Minister on 4 November, which met the target of being in place 6 months in advance of the elections. CO explained when the changes emanating from the ERA act would come into force. Work on the European Elections Welsh Forms Order is progressing and work on the regulations for other polls is ongoing.

## **(ii) funding**

3.2 CO informed the Group that, although discussions with the Treasury on the Fees and Charges Order for the 2014 European Elections were still ongoing, it hoped to issue both the Fees and Charges Order and the RO expenses guidance, in the near future. CO confirmed that funding would account for inflation and any increases to the size of the electorate and to the number of postal voters. CO thanked BPJ, RRO Wales Region, for his assistance in establishing which data set should be used as the basis for the funding allocations for counting areas in Wales given that the 2009 European Parliamentary election was run on a constituency basis as opposed to local authorities.

## **(iii) procurement**

3.3 CO also updated the group on Government procurement frameworks that were discussed at the previous meeting. CO has met with colleagues from the Government Procurement Service and is aware that some Returning Officers already make use of frameworks to procure goods and services required for running an election. CO will work further with GPS colleagues to share data and look at the potential for savings but this would be looked at with a medium term view (i.e. potentially in advance of the 2015 General election). CO also informed the Group that Royal Mail had confirmed that it could offer a cheaper rate to Returning Officers, provided there was universal usage. CO considered that users may prefer to retain some degree of local flexibility. There would be a continued dialogue with Royal Mail as to the level of flexibility possible within any contract. **Action: CO**

## **4. Practical issues for 2014 polls**

4.1 CO led discussion on subject of the ballot paper to be used at the European elections, highlighting the capabilities and constraints for printers. The majority of those consulted were able to cope with a larger number of candidates, but it was stressed that there was a need to check capability and capacity for all printers being used within each RRO's region. There was a call for a consistency of approach. The Electoral Commission confirmed that the Working Group (WG) is investigating this issue and will report back at the next meeting. RROs also confirmed that the Security Guidance document was useful and Cabinet Office agreed to take this forward with the Home Office (HO). **Action: WG and CO**

### **(i) Presentation on collation of European Election results**

4.2 Andy Tye from Scytl gave a presentation on the collation process the company would use in publishing the results of the EP elections. He confirmed that Scytl would publish no exit poll data until the European Commission authorised it to do so. CO confirmed that there was no UK Government endorsement of the operation and it would inform RROs should there be any constraints placed upon them. Scytl confirmed there was no onus on those running elections in the UK to provide it with any information.

## **(ii) Feedback from Working Group**

### **4.3**

- The Electoral Commission confirmed that there was support for a white ballot paper.
- The issue about location of an official mark would be explored further at the next WG meeting.
- The discussion highlighted a need for consistency with the Royal Mail sweeps.
- The Commission confirmed it was in support of sweeps and considered more research was required. CO said it would look at the approach in 2009 and how funding was provided and report back. **Action: Working Group/CO**

4.4 The Electoral Commission also confirmed that the Working Group will look at how to strengthen its guidance on verification. It would also consider the criteria required when recounts were requested **Action; Working Group**

## **5 The Combination Picture**

5.1 Whilst scheduled combinations can be planned for, CO reiterated the need for RROs to check whether there are any Neighbourhood Planning referendums planned at the time of the 2014 European elections, within their regions and ensure election teams liaise closely with their colleagues in planning teams.

## **6 Transparency of Lobbying Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill**

6.1 Cabinet Office presented information on the Transparency of Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Bill currently in Parliament. Clause 34 of the Bill provides that a third party campaigning on behalf of or against a candidate in a constituency at a General Election will be required to keep a record of spending incurred between £200 and £700. Returning Officers have the right to request this record of expenditure in the six months after the date of poll. Nothing in the clause would affect the discretion of Returning Officers not to request this information, should a compliant be directed to them. There were questions raised as to the legal position of the RO request, when such a request is appropriate and whether any sanctions were applicable. CO will provide updates on the passage of this clause as and when required. **Action: CO**

## **7 Auto enrolment and RTI online reporting**

7.1 CO noted that the outcome of the meeting with DWP and electoral administrators was that the majority of casual staff working on elections would not need to be enrolled; although it is more likely to apply to canvassers should they work over a number of days or weeks. The deadline date for auto-enrolment is after the 2014 European elections and CO will research further in order to provide more information. **Action: CO**

### **RTI**

7.2 CO advised that discussions with HMRC confirmed that the introduction of this system cannot be deferred. ROs will need to ensure that the electoral management systems they use will either have to link to an existing payroll system or have a discrete payroll system. HMRC informed CO that they will not provide funding for the implementation and running of the system. However,

feedback from those who have already made the change is positive and indicates future savings.

## **8 Any Other Business**

8.1 There was no AOB.

## **9. Next Meeting**

9.1 The next meeting will be held on 10 December 2013 at **11.15am** at the Electoral Commission.