



Cabinet Office

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Our Ref: CDL/2846

Bob Posner
Chief Executive
The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row
London, EC1Y 8YZ

01 April 2019

Dear Mr Posner,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March.

Whilst the Government's position is that it remains the intention for the UK to leave the EU with a deal and not take part in the European Parliamentary Elections in May, I agree it is important that Returning Officers and electoral administrators should be able to plan effectively to deliver national polls which are well-run and fair, and seen to be so.

I am able to confirm that Cabinet Office will reimburse reasonable spending by Returning Officers on contingency preparations for European Parliament Elections. We are today issuing the following advice to Returning Officers:

Following Friday's vote in the House of Commons, the opportunity to guarantee that the UK would not participate in EP elections has been removed.

Cabinet Office is therefore confirming that Returning Officers will be reimbursed in the usual way for any expenditure on activity that is necessarily undertaken, at this stage and in the coming weeks, to prepare for the possibility of European Parliamentary elections on Thursday 23 May 2019. An Order setting the Appointed Day of Poll would be required under the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002 to hold elections.

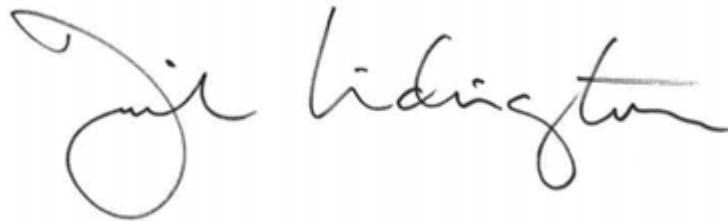
Returning Officers will want to be particularly mindful of the need to use public money appropriately. This is particularly the case in the current circumstances. For example, thought should be given to what actions are strictly necessary ahead of the start of an election timetable and what can be undertaken on a contingency basis given that circumstances may continue to change.

A Statutory Instrument will be made in due course, which will confirm the legal basis for Cabinet Office to reimburse Returning Officers for expenditure necessarily incurred. Claims for reimbursement will be made through the Elections Claims Unit in the usual way.

I appreciate that speculation over recent weeks has contributed to unusual circumstances for Returning Officers and electoral administrators. I trust that this guidance will assist Returning Officers in respect of any reasonable planning that they deem necessary. I am sure that you and your colleagues at the Electoral Commission will continue to provide suitable advice and support to Returning Officers and their teams.

I can confirm that Chloe Smith is also writing today in similar terms to Louise Round at SOLACE and to Peter Stanyon at the AEA to ensure that they are aware.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP