

Boundary Commission for Scotland

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, Edinburgh

Wednesday 3 May 2017

Present

The Hon Lord Matthews, Deputy Chairman
Professor Ailsa Henderson, Commissioner
Mrs Paula Sharp, Commissioner

Isabel Drummond-Murray, Secretary
Douglas Campbell, Secretariat
Laura Cregan, Secretariat
David Logue, Secretariat
Colin Wilson, Secretariat

Ms Michaela Gordon, Ordnance Survey, Assessor
Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the 13 April 2017 meeting were agreed without amendment.

Matters arising

2. The Secretary advised the Commission that she was awaiting feedback from Equalities Unit of the Scottish Government on the Commission's statement on equality issues to ensure it was following best practice. The Secretary also advised that she had discussed equality issues with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The Secretariat would ensure that next round of public consultation was accessible, and took into account hard-to-reach groups.
3. The Secretary advised the Commission that there was no update on the progress of Pat Glass MP's Private Member's Bill, the "Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill 2016-17", although it would be unlikely to progress due the forthcoming General Election.
4. The Secretary advised that the Commission meeting scheduled for 7th August would be moved to 8th August, following consultation with Commissioners. A revised list of dates would be circulated.

Business Update

5. The Commission noted that a General Election had been called for 8th June 2017. Following discussion with the other UK boundary commissions, the Secretariat had issued a statement to the effect that the Commission would continue the 2018 Review, working within the legislation as currently in force. The Secretary advised that she would review the election manifestos of

- political parties prior to the election to see if there were any mention of the 2018 Review.
6. The Commission noted that, as things currently stand, the 2018 Review will report in September 2018, with the subsequent election now due to take place in 2022, rather than 2020; the legislation would require submission of the next and subsequent Review reports every 5 years after 2018.
 7. The Secretary advised the Commission that Cabinet Office is due to begin its Triennial Review of the Commission, conducted as part of its regular reviews of non-departmental public bodies. The Commission was last reviewed in 2015, when Cabinet Office concluded that: "there remains a strong need for a credible non-party political body which is independent from government to carry out the functions of the Boundary Commissions". The report is due in 2018.
 8. The Secretary advised the Commission that the responsibility for carrying out Scottish Parliament reviews would transfer from the Commission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS) on 18 May 2017. LGBCS may seek to change its name to reflect its new responsibilities and the Commission would be kept informed of any implications arising from this.

Consideration of Revised Proposals Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee council areas (Paper 2017/64)

9. At its meeting of 13 April 2017 the Commission considered revised proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee council areas (see Paper 2017/62). The Commission asked the Secretariat to further develop Option 1, aiming to include as much of Deeside in Gordon and Deeside constituency as possible without causing excessive disruption to local ties at Peterculter or in Angus. The Commission also deferred consideration of Option 3, which offers two constituencies made up of whole wards covering the extent of Aberdeen City council area.
10. The Commission considered BCS Paper 2017/64. The Secretariat presented an additional appendix (Appendix D5), which showed a variant of Option 4, in which the Drumoak area north of the River Dee is included within an Aberdeen South constituency rather than Kincardine and Angus North constituency.
11. The Commission considered Option 4 preferable to its Initial Proposals and the other alternative suggestions, because it improves local ties at Banchory by including it in a Deeside constituency, without disrupting local ties at Peterculter; places Midsocket within an Aberdeen South constituency; reflects local ties in Angus by placing Brechin, Forfar and Montrose within a Kincardine and Angus East constituency; links Arbroath within an Angus

- South and Dundee East constituency; and because it considered that it better reflected local ties in Angus than its Initial Proposals or Option 1.
12. The Commission considered Option 3, but did not adopt it, as it does not reflect local ties outside Aberdeen and did not improve its Initial Proposals at Banchory.
 13. While persuaded of the merits of Option 4, the Commission expressed concern that the small strip of coastline at Balmedie which is included in the Gordon and Deeside constituency may not best reflect local ties in the area. The Commission asked the Secretariat to prepare a modified version of Option 4 in which a larger stretch of the coastline is contained within Gordon and Deeside constituency, or alternatively, all of the coastline is included within Aberdeen North constituency.
 14. The Commission noted that the Drumoak area could not be included within Gordon and Deeside constituency, without making significant changes elsewhere: to do so would breach the maximum number of electors permitted by the legislation for this review. The Commission considered that including this area within Aberdeen South constituency would better reflect local ties than including it within Kincardine and Angus North constituency, and asked the Secretariat to incorporate this change within a revised Option 4.
 15. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to review the boundary between Kincardine and Angus North constituency and Angus South and Dundee East constituency to the west and to the south east of Forfar: near Padnaram and Lownie Moor, where the proposed boundary cuts across roads, with a view to improving connectivity within the constituencies.

Consideration of Revised Proposals East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Renfrewshire (Paper 2017/77)

16. The Commission considered BCS Paper 2017/77. Lord Matthews declared an interest, as a resident of the area considered in the paper.
17. The Commission noted that there had been significant public support for its proposed Ayr and Carrick constituency in South Ayrshire, and its proposed Cunninghame East constituency during its public consultations.
18. The Commission considered that Option 1 is preferable to its Initial Proposals, because it links Inverclyde with Renfrewshire, with which it has stronger ties, especially transport links, rather than Largs. Option 1 also retains 4 constituencies from the Initial Proposals including the Ayr and Carrick constituency, and the Cunninghame East constituency, which were well supported in the public consultation. The Commission noted that Option 2 also has these advantages, but proposes a constituency which extends

- from the Cumbraes to East Renfrewshire council area, which would be less cohesive than the equivalent constituency in Option 1.
19. The Commission did not consider that Options 3 or 4 presented an improvement to its Initial Proposals. There had been a number of responses opposing the suggestion from Kenny Gibson MSP (Option 3) as it split Newton Mearns. Options 3 and 4 also did not reflect the Initial Proposals where there had been considerable support for the proposed Ayr and Carrick constituency
 20. The Commission agreed to adopt Option 1 as its Revised Proposals for its consultation on Revised Proposals for East Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and Renfrewshire council areas.
 21. The Commission noted suggestions it had received for constituency names, and agreed to rename Cunninghame East constituency as "Eastwood and Loudon" constituency. The Commission also agreed to rename Cunninghame West constituency as "Arran and Cunninghame", and to adopt the names "Inverclyde", "Paisley," "West Renfrewshire", for the three northern constituencies suggested in Option 1. The Commission left the name of "Ayr and Carrick" constituency and the name of "Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Doon Valley" constituency unchanged from the Initial Proposals.

Memorandum of Understanding (Paper 2017/67A)

22. The Commission discussed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the Scotland Office and noted it was intended to be a "live" document. The Commission agreed to adopt it, with minor amendments, effective from 18th May 2017, when responsibility for Scottish Parliament reviews is transferred from the Commission to the LGBCS.

Finance update (Paper 2017/68A)

16. The Secretariat updated the Commission on its forecasts for the year ahead. The Commission noted that there remained some uncertainty over the overall budget for 2017-18, pending the transfer of responsibility for Scottish Parliament boundaries and any subsequent budget transfer required. If no budget transfer is required then there may be scope for additional discretionary projects to be pursued. A further update would be given at the next meeting.
17. The Secretariat advised the Commission that it was also still awaiting clarification from its sponsor department, the Scotland Office, over the application of VAT to recharges paid by the Scotland Office to the Scottish Government. The Commission considered this, and noted that it may need to review the financial model used and therefore the Memorandum of Understanding.

Secretariat
May 2017