

Boundary Commission for Scotland

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, Edinburgh

Monday 13 June 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

Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey, Assessor
Tim Ellis, National Records of Scotland, Assessor

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the 3 May 2017 meeting were agreed with minor amendments.

Matters arising

2. The Secretary advised the Commission that Pat Glass MP's Private Members Bill, the "Parliamentary Constituencies (Amendment) Bill 2016-17" had fallen due to Parliament being dissolved before the General Election which was held on 8 June 2017.
3. The Secretary advised the Commission that no further update was available on the commencement of the Triennial Review of non-departmental public bodies with respect to the Commission, and that she would continue to liaise with Cabinet Office.
4. The Secretary advised the Commission that responsibility for Scottish Parliament boundaries had transferred to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBCS), effective from 18 May 2017.
5. The Secretariat discussed the Commission's website. It noted that the website was recently attacked by a ransomware virus. No data had been lost but public users were unable to access the website for over a week while a new server was installed.
6. The Secretariat noted that its website was some years old, and would benefit from being refreshed to work better with mobile devices and to improve accessibility, and that its content would also have to be changed to reflect the

transfer of responsibilities for Scottish Parliament boundaries to the LGBCS. The Commission was content for the Secretariat to explore options for updating the website.

7. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat is still awaiting clarification from its sponsor department, the Scotland Office, on VAT applied to recharges paid by the Scotland Office to the Scottish Government. This will affect the costs shown in the 2016-17 Annual Report, future finance updates and also previous years' costs.

Business Update

8. The Commission noted that the General Election had taken place on 8 June 2017.

Consideration of Revised Proposals North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway council areas (Paper 2017/66)

9. The Commission considered the responses to its public consultations and noted in particular that there had been a high level of public opposition to the Initial Proposals' boundaries at Dumfries and Annan, as well as opposition to the division of Airdrie, on the grounds that these broke local ties.
10. The Commission agreed that the alternative boundary suggested in Options 1, 2 and 3 which incorporates Heathhall and Locharbriggs in a Dumfries constituency, and incorporates Annan in a constituency with the rest of Annandale, would better reflect local ties in both areas. The Commission noted that the consultation response which had suggested these boundaries was based on aggregation of postcode areas. The Commission agreed that these changes should be incorporated in its Revised Proposals, subject to confirmation from the Secretariat that the suggested boundaries could clearly be defined using recognisable features on the ground or existing boundaries.
11. The Commission considered that Option 1 did not represent an improvement on its Initial Proposals, as it did not address the division of Airdrie, and made changes to the Initial Proposals in Lanarkshire in areas where those proposals had not attracted opposition.
12. The Commission noted that Option 2 did not address the division of Airdrie, essentially retaining the Initial Proposals in North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire.
13. The Commission noted that Option 3 addressed the division of Airdrie by placing Airdrie and part of Coatbridge in the same constituency, and made changes to other areas which attracted little comment during the public consultations in order to accommodate this. The Commission noted that

- Option 3's division of Coatbridge may attract similar opposition to the division of Airdrie.
14. The Commission asked the Secretariat to further develop Option 2, to explore the possibility of lessening the division of Airdrie by incorporating the Cairnhill area within the suggested "Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Monklands East" constituency.
 15. The Commission also requested the Secretariat develop Option 3 to explore the possibility of retaining Coatbridge within a single constituency.
 16. The Commission deferred consideration of suggestions for constituency names.

Consideration of Revised Proposals Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee council areas (Paper 2017/68)

17. At its meetings of 13 April 2017 and 3 May 2017, the Commission had considered revised proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee council areas (see Paper BCS 2017/62 and Paper 2017/64).
18. At the meeting of 3 May 2017 the Commission favoured Option 4 over the alternative options and the Initial Proposals as it: improved local ties at Banchory by placing it in a Deeside constituency; placed Midstocket in Aberdeen South constituency; reflected local ties in Angus by placing Brechin, Forfar and Montrose within a Kincardine and Angus East constituency and linked Arbroath within an Angus South and Dundee East constituency.
19. The Commission asked the Secretariat to further develop Option 4 in order to: better reflect local ties at the coastline at Balmedie by including a larger stretch of coastline within Gordon and Deeside constituency, or alternatively, including all of the coastline within Aberdeen North constituency; keep Drumoak within Deeside by including it in Aberdeen South constituency; as well as to modify the boundary between Kincardine and Angus North constituency and Angus South and Dundee East constituency around Forfar to improve connectivity within these constituencies.
20. The Commission considered that Option 5 enhanced Option 4: by improving local ties at Balmedie by including it in an Aberdeen North constituency; by improving local ties at Drumoak by including it in Aberdeen South constituency rather than a Kincardine and Angus constituency, (it could not be included within Gordon and Deeside constituency without requiring significant changes elsewhere); and by improving the connectivity within Kincardine and Angus North constituency and Angus South and Dundee East constituency by amending the boundary between them around Forfar by using a boundary similar to the Scottish Parliament boundary in the area.

21. The Commission considered Option 5 an improvement to its Initial Proposals, and agreed to adopt it as its Revised Proposals for its consultation on Revised Proposals for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee council areas.

2018 Review – next steps (oral update)

22. The Commission and the Secretariat discussed the timing of future papers with respect to scheduled Commission meetings.

BCS Annual Report 2016-17 (Paper 2017/69)

23. The Commission discussed the Annual Report, and asked the Secretariat to make minor changes. The Commission will consider a further draft once the Secretariat has received advice from the sponsor department on the treatment of VAT.

Use of Twitter (Paper 2017/70)

24. The Commission discussed the use of Twitter to promote its activities, and approved a proposal that a sum of up to £1000 be used to support its efforts in this area. The services of NRS and OS marketing teams were offered to provide any assistance with developing twitter audience.

Finance update (Paper 2017/71)

25. The Commission noted the finance update and asked that in future it should itemise significant expenditure to add clarity.

Any other business

26. The Secretariat advised the Commission that it had been shortlisted for the Connect Citizens award at the Holyrood Connect Awards, for the development of the consultation portal, a project which uses ICT to engage with citizens. The Secretariat also suggested the consultation portal could be nominated for the Civil Service Awards later this year and the Commission agreed that should be pursued.
27. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday 6 July 2017.