

## 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies Consultation Portal

### Action Required

1. The Commission is invited to note the progress on the development of a functional specification for a shared consultation portal for the upcoming 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies, and to agree its next steps.

### Background

2. The Commission will soon begin its 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies, in common with the Boundary Commissions for the other parts of the United Kingdom. The legislation which governs the review is the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 ('the 1986 Act') which was substantially amended by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act').
3. The legislation requires the Commission to undertake consultation on Initial Proposals, responses to that consultation and any Revised Proposals. Any further consultation is discretionary.
4. The Commission first made use of a dedicated online consultation portal for its Sixth Periodic Review of UK Parliament Constituencies in 2011, which was procured from Informed Solutions Ltd after a tendering process under a Scottish Government Framework Agreement.
5. That consultation portal:
  - Provided users with an interactive mapping facility that allowed them to zoom in and out to view proposals at different scales;
  - Enabled users to submit representations on proposals;
  - Provided a vehicle for users to view and comment on representations submitted during the initial consultation;
  - Gathered site usage metadata;
  - Enabled both original and redacted representations to be stored (redaction was conducted offline and the redacted documents uploaded thereafter);
  - Enabled users to create an account that gave access to the user's submitted representations;
6. The Commission undertook a survey of respondents to consultations during the Sixth Review. The results of that survey can be found in BCS Paper 2013/11. The survey suggested that the consultation portal was the most popular means of viewing proposals.
7. At the UK Commissions' meeting in November 2015, the Commission agreed to participate in the 'Discovery phase' of the Boundary Commission for England's portal project: the development of a functional specification for a shared consultation portal. The Discovery phase will be followed by alpha and beta phases prior to a launch planned for September 2016 to coincide with the publication of Initial Proposals. The Commission has not yet agreed whether or not to participate in those phases of development.

8. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland currently has a consultation portal also provided by Informed Solutions after a tendering process under the Cabinet Office's Cloud Framework Agreement. That call-off agreement expired on 23 January 2016.

### **Shared portal – Discovery Phase**

9. The Secretariat has been working with Cabinet Office and Secretariats from the other UK boundary commissions to develop a functional specification for a consultation portal to be shared by all 4 commissions for the forthcoming 2018 Review. The agreed specification is due for completion by 16 February 2016.
10. The functional specification is backed by user research conducted on behalf of the Boundary Commission for England by Cabinet Office researchers.
11. The estimated costs for the development, hosting and maintenance of the shared portal are currently unknown: the finance update within BCS Paper 2016/06 includes an amount for initiation of the portal development phase and is based on the costs incurred by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland when developing a portal for its current reviews of local government electoral arrangements.

### **Options**

12. The Commission has the following options:
  - Commit to a shared portal;
  - Re-use the portal used for the 6th Review; or
  - Consult using existing resources: the Commission's website and the map browser that is shared with the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland.
13. A decision is sought from all 4 UK commissions on whether or not to proceed with the development of a shared portal by 26 February. The Secretariat suggests that the Commission consider the matter further once the functional specification has been finalised. This would need to be done via email as the next Commission meeting is not scheduled to take place before a decision needs to be made.

### **Discussion**

14. There are likely to be benefits from a shared portal with potential cost and other resource savings. These have yet to be itemised.
15. The principal potential disadvantage of a shared portal is the loss of direct control by the Commission.
16. The development team have made clear that, given the scale of the review in England, the project timetable is likely to be driven by the needs of the Boundary Commission for England. That should not in itself cause the Commission concern providing there is sufficient flexibility for all 4 commissions.

17. The Commission is the only one of the 4 parliamentary commissions in the UK to have direct experience of portal development and deployment for a review. Its participation in the project will provide a convenient vehicle to allow all commissions to benefit from that experience.

### **Recommendation**

18. The Commission is invited to:

- consider the means by which a consultation portal is procured for the forthcoming 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies;
- agree the Secretariat continue to work with the other 4 commissions until completion of the Discovery phase of the project; and
- consider further advice which will be put to the Commission as soon as the outcomes of the Discovery phase are received by the Secretariat.

Secretariat  
February 2016