

2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies Consultation on Initial Proposals – Public Hearings and Public Consultation

Action required

1. The Commission is invited to consider locations for its Public Hearings when it publishes its initial proposals for public consultation in late 2016 and to review its process for announcing and publishing its proposals for consultation.

Background – Public Hearings

2. The purpose of a public hearing is to enable representations to be made about any of the Commission's proposals with which the hearing is concerned.
3. The Commission must hold at least two but no more than five public hearings within weeks 5-10 of the 12 week consultation period. The hearings should be completed within two days.
4. The public hearings are chaired by a Sheriff Principal and the Commission may wish to consider venues spread across different sheriffdoms, so that a different Sheriff Principal is responsible for each Public Hearing. There are six sheriffdoms in Scotland: Glasgow and Strathkelvin; Grampian, Highland and Islands; Lothian and Borders; North Strathclyde; South Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway; Tayside, Central and Fife.
5. The Commission expects to publish its initial proposals in mid-October 2016, after the political party conferences have been concluded.
6. Verbatim reporters transcribe each hearing.

Background – publicising the Commission's initial proposals

7. The Commission is invited to review its process for publicising its proposals for public consultation.
8. The legislation governing the reviews states:
*“the Commission shall take such steps as they think fit to inform people in each of the proposed constituencies -
(i) what the proposals are,
(ii) that a copy of the proposals is open to inspection at a specified place within the proposed constituency, and
(iii) that written representations with respect to the proposals may be made to the Commission during a specified period of 12 weeks (“the initial consultation period”)”*
9. During previous reviews the Commission has published its proposals by issuing a news release, placed public notices in newspapers, published material on its website, distributed information to display points in each constituency written directly to organisations and elected representatives who have an interest in the reviews.
10. News releases have been published through the Commission's sponsor department at the Scotland Office.
11. During the 6th Review of UK Parliament constituencies the Commission published a public notice in the national press (Herald, Scotsman, Metro) and local press (about 50 local or regional newspapers) to announce the start of its public

consultation. The Commission also hand delivered its proposals to MPs at Westminster during the 6th Reviews.

12. During previous reviews the Commission has published its proposals on its website and placed its proposals on public display at display points, the display points are usually council offices or libraries. A poster is typically displayed with further information available in hard copy or on a cd. The further information usually includes maps of the proposals in the vicinity, policy and procedures booklet and news release. The display materials are sent to a Council contact to distribute to display points or sent directly to suggested display points. GIS files have also been available to download from its website.
13. The Commission has also written directly to key stakeholders involved in previous reviews, these include MPs, political parties, Councils, Electoral Registration Officers, MSP's and community councils etc.
14. The public consultation on the Commission's initial proposals will last for 12 weeks.

Discussion

15. The outline Project Plan for the 2018 Review has proposed holding Public Hearings from mid-November to late December 2016. The Commission meetings for late 2016 are scheduled for the 7 November and 12 December 2016.
16. It is expected that the Secretary or Sheriff Principal will make a presentation at each hearing but not engage in debate on the Proposals. The Commission's proposals and further information will be available to view and comment on at the public hearing. One or two members of the Secretariat will attend in support.
17. The Commission may wish to hold two Public Hearings in the main cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow as these cover a number of constituencies across the central belt of Scotland. The Commission will also want to consider holding at least one public Hearing in the north and the south of the country.
18. Schedule 2A of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended states that public hearings must be completed within 2 days, see Appendix A. During the 6th Review of UK Parliament constituencies, the Commission held 5 public hearings. These were located in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Inverness and New Lanark. Prior to each hearing between 5 and 11 individuals stated they wished to make a representation at a public hearing. The public hearings were scheduled for 2 days but all were concluded within a day. Therefore the Commission may wish to consider holding public hearings for 1 day rather than 2. Most respondents to previous consultations commented in writing rather than verbally.
19. The Secretariat will wish to seek the availability of Sheriff Principals and Verbatim Reporters for the hearings.
20. The table below offers some suggested locations for public hearings and the council area groupings nearest to their location.

Location	Council area groupings
Edinburgh	East Lothian City of Edinburgh, West Lothian Midlothian and Scottish Borders
Glasgow	East and West Dunbartonshire Glasgow City Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Ayrshires

	(North, South, East)
Aberdeen and/or Dundee and/or Inverness and/or Perth and/or Stirling	Argyll and Bute, Highland and Moray Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus and Dundee City Fife, Perth and Kinross Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling
Dumfries and/or Ayr and/or Hamilton and/or New Lanark	Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Ayrshires (North, South, East) Dumfries and Galloway, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire

21. The Commission may wish to review how it announces consultation stages of a review and whether it wishes to continue issuing public notices in local and or national newspapers.
22. There is a significant cost with advertising public notices in a number of newspapers, however there is provision for this within the 2018 Review budget. Unfortunately it is difficult to evaluate how many people read public notices in newspapers.
23. The Commission has traditionally used display points to display its proposals during public consultation stages of a review. The display points are usually council offices or libraries and the locations are suggested by council representatives.
24. During previous reviews the Secretariat has sent hard copies of its proposals (poster, booklet, news release, cd-rom etc) directly to display points or to a council contact to forward to display points. This depends on the goodwill of council staff or library staff to display and later remove the materials. Surveys of display points during previous reviews have shown that the materials have not always been displayed or some staff are unaware of where the materials are stored.
25. During the 6th Review the Commission displayed its proposals at approximately 180 display points where there was a need to only display in one display point per proposed constituency. For the 2018 Review the Boundary Commission for England are planning to display their proposals at a single display point per constituency and are not displaying their proposals in a constituency if there are no changes proposed for that constituency. The Commission may wish to adopt a similar approach to the Boundary Commission for England, which would reduce print and postage costs.
26. The Commission may wish to consider if the materials for display points are printed or available electronically (ie USB memory-stick or cd-rom).
27. During recent reviews the Commission has been adopting a more digital approach during public consultations by using its website and also using a consultation portal to engage with stakeholders during public consultation stages.
28. The Commission can consult with political parties on the best method to deliver its proposals to MPs.
29. The Commission has also embraced social media and it is hoped that the Commission's Facebook and twitter accounts can publicise its proposals to a wider audience.

Conclusion and Recommendation

30. The Secretariat recommends that the Commission agrees the number and location of its Public Hearings; and confirm how it wishes to announce and publish its proposals for public consultation.

Secretariat
June 2016

Appendix A

Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended SCHEDULE 2A
PUBLIC HEARINGS ABOUT BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS

Purpose of hearings

1 The purpose of a public hearing is to enable representations to be made about any of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned.

Number of hearings

2 (1) In relation to any particular report under section 3(1)(a) of this Act -

- (a) the Boundary Commission for England shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in each English region;
 - (b) the Boundary Commission for Scotland shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Scotland;
 - (c) the Boundary Commission for Wales shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Wales;
 - (d) the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland shall cause at least two and no more than five public hearings to be held in Northern Ireland.
- (2) The public hearings in an English region shall be concerned with proposals for that region, and shall between them cover the whole region.
- (3) The public hearings in Scotland shall be concerned with proposals for Scotland, and shall between them cover the whole of Scotland.
- (4) The public hearings in Wales shall be concerned with proposals for Wales, and shall between them cover the whole of Wales.
- (5) The public hearings in Northern Ireland shall be concerned with proposals for Northern Ireland, and shall between them cover the whole of Northern Ireland.

Chair of hearing

3 For each public hearing the Boundary Commission concerned shall appoint a person to chair the hearing.

Length of hearings

4 A public hearing shall be completed within two days.

Procedure at hearings

5 It is for the chair of each public hearing to determine the procedure that is to govern that hearing.

6 The chair shall make arrangements for a public hearing to begin with an explanation of -

- (a) the proposals with which the hearing is concerned;
- (b) how written representations about the proposals may be made (as mentioned in section 5(1)(a), (4)(b) or (5)(c) of this Act).

7 (1) The chair of a public hearing must allow representations to be made -

- (a) by each qualifying party;
- (b) by any other persons (whether individuals or organisations) considered by the chair to have an interest in any of the proposals with which the hearing is concerned.

Paragraph (b) above has effect subject to sub-paragraph (3)(b) below.

(2) The chair may restrict the amount of time allowed for representations -

- (a) by qualifying parties, and
 - (b) by other persons, and need not allow the same amount to each.
- (3) The chair may determine -

- (a) the order in which representations are made, and
- (b) if necessary because of shortage of time, which of those wishing to make representations are not allowed to do so, in whatever way the chair decides.

8 (1) The chair may put questions, or allow questions to be put, to a person present at the hearing.

(2) If questions are allowed to be put, the chair may regulate the manner of questioning or restrict the number of questions a person may ask.