

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, Edinburgh

Monday 17 February 2020

Present

The Hon Lord Matthews, Deputy Chairman
Mrs Paula Sharp, Commissioner
Professor Ailsa Henderson, Commissioner
Mr Dominic Cuthbert, Ordnance Survey, Assessor

Isabel Drummond-Murray, Secretary
Colin Wilson
Douglas Campbell
David Logue
Yvonne Croll

Apologies

Paul Lowe, National Records of Scotland, Assessor

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the 11 November 2019 meeting were agreed with no amendments.

Matters arising

2. The Secretary updated the Commission that she recently wrote to Sir Lindsay Hoyle to welcome him as the new Speaker in the House of Commons and Chair to the four UK Boundary Commissions, and to extend an open invitation to visit the Commission.

Business update

3. The Commission heard a summary of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's (LGBCS) work programme which included the progress of current reviews of Electoral Arrangements for the six council areas included under the Islands (Scotland) Act, and that the report for the Interim Review of Scottish Parliament boundaries at Cardowan by Stepps is expected to be submitted to Scottish Ministers in March 2020.
4. The Commission was also advised that the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill, has completed Stage One in the Scottish Parliament. The Bill could rename the LGBCS to Boundaries Scotland, and affect its work timetable by changing the dates by which it is required to complete future reviews of Scottish Parliament and local authority electoral boundaries.
5. The Secretary made the Commission aware that a new Welsh Elections (Reform) Bill is being introduced enabling local authorities in Wales to choose the electoral system in their council area. The Commission noted that it would be prepared to have discussions with its Welsh counterpart on any implications for future UK Parliament Reviews if the ward structure of local authorities is changed.

2018 Review – (oral update)

6. The Commission noted that the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's appeal hearing with respect to the judicial review of the 2018 Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies took place on 23 January 2020 and that the outcome of the judgement may not be known for some time.

2023 Review – (oral update)

7. The Commission was advised of possible changes to the timetable and structure of the next review of UK Parliament Constituencies, which is currently scheduled to report by 1st October 2023 although no announcement has been made yet.
8. The Commission asked the Secretariat to bring a paper to the next meeting with suggestions as to how the 2023 Review is approached. This included:
 - suggestions for a map style guide for meeting papers and the final report;
 - to liaise with the LGBCS with regards to a naming policy for the next reviews of UK Parliament constituencies and Scottish Parliament constituencies to minimise the risk of public confusion;
 - the Commission agreed that Paper 2018/25 2018 Review – Lessons Learned be discussed at the next meeting as the Commission makes preliminary preparations for its 2023 Review.

2023 Review – consultation site options (Paper 2020/01)

9. The Commission noted options for an online public consultation site for the upcoming 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. The Secretariat had met with Informed Solutions, Boundary Commission for England and Boundary Commission for Wales on possibly re-using the 2018 Review consultation portal for the 2023 Review. The Secretariat will circulate a quote from Informed Solutions with pros and cons for the options available to the Commission at a later date.

Appointments (oral update)

10. The Commission was advised that the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland will soon be making preparations for recruiting a replacement for Mrs Sharp. A draft job description and job specification will be shared with the Commission for comment.
11. The Deputy Chair advised he would be content to stay in post for a further 2 year term, from January 2022 until the end of 2023 so would not need to be replaced during the 2023 Review.

UK Commissions meeting (oral update)

12. The Secretary provided an update of the UK Commissions meeting, hosted by the Boundary Commission for England, that took place in London in November 2019.
13. The Secretary informed the Commission that the next meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions will be hosted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 26 and 27 November 2020 in London. The Commissioners attending the meeting will be agreed at a future meeting.

Draft Corporate Plan (Paper 2020/02)

14. The Commission discussed the draft Corporate Plan, and noted that the amount forecast was significantly lower than it has been allocated for 2020-21. The Commission requested the Secretariat make some minor changes to the Corporate Plan text. The Commission deferred agreeing the final version of the Corporate Plan until it had received revised quotes on the cost of the consultation portal, and further clarification on the timetable for the next review.

Finance update (Paper 2020/03)

15. The Commission noted the latest finance update.

Future meetings (oral)

16. The Commission agreed to meet again in May 2020 and the Commission were content for the Secretariat to canvass for a suitable date.

Any other business

17. There was no other business.

Secretariat
February 2020