

**UK Boundary Commissions meeting**

**Action Required**

1. The Commission is invited to note that the 2017 UK Boundary Commission's meeting was held in November 2017 and to have a preliminary discussion about arrangements for the 2018 meeting.

**Discussion**

2. The annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions was held in Cardiff on 16-17 November 2017. The Commission was represented by the Chair and Secretary. Professor Henderson was also in attendance representing the Boundary Commission for Scotland.
3. On 16 November there was a tour of the Senedd which the Chair and Secretary were unable to attend because of travel constraints. The dinner was attended by the newly-appointed Cabinet Secretary for Local Government, Alun Davies and the Director of Local Government, Welsh Government, Reg Kilpatrick.
4. The morning session followed the traditional format of short updates on ongoing work from each of the UK parliamentary and local government commissions.
5. The guest speaker in the morning was Richard Wyn Jones, Professor of Welsh Politics, Cardiff University, presenting analysis of attitudes to Brexit in Wales, England and Scotland and the role of national identity. The afternoon session was focused on the 2018 Parliamentary Review of Westminster constituencies.
6. For LGBCS, the Chair was able to highlight the transfer of responsibility for Scottish Parliament boundaries; the work around the Islands Bill; and the thought being given to a rolling review approach post-5<sup>th</sup> reviews. There was a useful discussion about consultation and engagement in which LGBCS explained some of its approach which includes stronger engagement with local government associations and communities; and the importance of facilitating debate while maintaining its independence. LGBCS have been much more active in working with local authorities to ensure effective engagement, including asking authorities for lists of community groups and others that should be consulted.
7. In terms of councillor numbers, LGBCS reiterated the approach it has previously shared with LGBCS, namely that it starts with asking authorities how many councillors they need and to justify any significant departures from the current position and from their "neighbour" authorities as benchmarked using CIPFA indicators. It noted that the trend since 2010 had been for a reduction in numbers (down 6.7% on average overall and down over 20% on average where reviews are undertaken at the request of an authority).
8. The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales referred to the success of a lead Commissioner approach for reviews. The Secretariat intends to arrange a visit with the Welsh Secretariat to discuss a number of issues, including their structure and role supporting two Commissions; and how they conduct reviews to see what lessons can be learned.
9. It was clear that there was interest in consultation and engagement and the ongoing question of councillor numbers but not sufficient time within the

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meeting itself to follow up in any depth. In a similar vein, there was interest amongst the Parliament Commissions in naming conventions for constituencies but insufficient time for much discussion and the Commission may wish to reflect on timing in planning the 2018 meeting.

**2018 meeting**

10. The 2018 meeting is to be held in Scotland, hosted jointly by BCS and LGBCS. Last time it was hosted in Scotland, in 2014, the dinner and meeting took place in the Calton Highland Hotel in Edinburgh. A tour of the Scottish Parliament was arranged before the dinner. The meeting itself incorporated round-the-table updates from the Commissions and a discussion session which covered:

- the Triennial Review of Parliamentary Boundary Commissions led by the Cabinet Office;
- Web-based consultation led by Informed Solutions;
- The best way for Commissions to use Social Media led by LGBCE; and
- Parliamentary Inquiry into constituency design led by BCE.

11. The guest speaker was Professor John Curtice from Strathclyde University, speaking on the Scottish Independence Referendum and its consequences.

12. The Commission may wish to begin its consideration of the arrangements for 2018 including venue, guest speaker and meeting structure to allow time for discussion on themes of common interest.

**Conclusion**

The Commission is invited to note the 2017 meeting report and that it will be joint host for the 2018 meeting to be held in Scotland.

Secretariat

November 2017