

**Minutes of Meeting held by videolink at 10.30am on Monday 29 November 2021****Present**

Mr R Hinds, Chair  
Prof. A Henderson, Deputy Chair  
Mr R Bean  
Mr J Collins  
Mr G Macmillan  
Dr S Walker

Ms I Drummond-Murray, Secretary  
Mr C Wilson  
Mr D Campbell  
Mr D Logue  
Mrs Y Croll

**Apologies:**

None

**Declaration of Interests**

1. There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of previous meeting**

2. The Commission agreed the minutes of its 12 October 2021 meeting without amendment.

**Matters arising**

3. There were no matters arising which would not be dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

**Business Update**

4. The Secretary noted that the Secretariat continues to follow Scottish Government guidelines regarding Covid and is mostly working from home.
5. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat had responded to press inquiries regarding the councillor who had submitted multiple consultation responses under different names during the public consultation on the Islands Reviews.
6. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat had not yet heard back from the Scottish Government regarding the implications of the councillor's action for the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

**Future scrutiny of Commission proposals (oral)**

7. The Commission noted that the Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary had met the Deputy First Minister on 4 November 2021 to discuss the approval process for the Commission's recommendations for the Islands Reviews, and the concerns over the implications for future reviews. The Deputy First Minister commended the Commission's work on the Islands Reviews and took note of the Commission's arguments in regards to the issues raised with the current approvals process. The Commission noted that it is at this point unclear what further steps the Deputy First Minister may take in this area regarding any change to legislation.

8. The Commission noted that on 2 November it had responded to a letter from the Convener of the Scottish Parliament Local Government Housing and Planning Committee, accepting the Committee's invitation to meet and setting out detailed comments on the Committee's report, but is still awaiting a response. The Commission asked the Secretary to follow this up, and check if there are standards for response times for Scottish Parliament Committees.
9. The Commission discussed any steps it might take while awaiting a meeting with the Committee, and any further correspondence from Scottish Ministers or Scottish Government officials on possible legislative changes to the approvals process for recommendations.
10. The Commission noted that Scottish Ministers are required by the legislation to request it to undertake reconsideration of its proposals for Argyll & Bute council area and Highland council area, and that it could not carry out such a reconsideration at present. The Commission agreed that it may seek legal advice regarding future reconsideration of its proposals for those council areas and whether this could be done as part of another review of those council areas.
11. The Commission agreed to give further consideration to what changes to the approvals process it might wish to see, and noted that Commission members have serious reservations about undertaking further reviews under the current arrangements. The Commission asked the Secretariat to engage with Scottish Government officials in the meantime to establish what further steps the Scottish Government is planning.

#### **Draft Corporate Plan Paper 2022-25 (Paper BS 005)**

12. The Commission considered the draft Corporate Plan (Paper BS 005).
13. The Commission noted that the draft Corporate Plan assumed that a reconsideration of electoral arrangements for Argyll & Bute council area and Highland council area would take place as part of the next planned set of local government reviews. The Commission noted that it is for the Deputy First Minister to notify the Commission when to conduct the reviews of Argyll & Bute and Highland council areas, and that the Corporate Plan should reflect this.
14. The Commission suggested that time for pre-review discussions with relevant interested parties be included in the Second Scottish Parliament Boundary Review plan.
15. The Commission asked to the Secretariat to review the plan with respect to assumptions made for the number of local inquiries, so that provision is made in case local inquiries are required in every council area; and to emphasise the uncertainty of the number of local inquiries and the importance that the Commission is fully resourced for this.
16. The Commission noted that the timetable for the 2nd Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries in the draft Corporate Plan was based on similar timings of review stages to those in the 1st Periodic Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries (2007-10). The Secretariat advised that it was also considering alternative options for timing and consultation. The Commission noted that most of its decision making on the Scottish Parliament Review would take place after the appointment of a new Chair, but asked that the Secretariat to prepare a paper for its next meeting to allow it to consider the timing and structure of the

Review in more detail. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to arrange for legal advice on any ambiguities in the legislation, and on any questions regarding local inquiries or the timing and structure of the Review, to inform that paper.

17. The Commission requested a number of other minor amendments to the text of the plan.

18. The Commission agreed that the Chair would agree a final version of the Corporate Plan with the Secretariat for submission to the sponsorship team in the Scottish Government.

#### **UK Commissions Meeting (oral)**

19. The Secretary advised that the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland will act as host for the annual UK Boundary Commissions meeting scheduled for 26 January 2022, which will be held by video-link. Public consultations will be one of the items on the agenda. The Chair, whose term of appointment is due to end in May, agreed to represent the Commission, and to give a presentation reflecting on his time as Chair.

20. Given the online nature of the meeting, the Commission agreed that other Commissioners who were available could also attend, subject to any limit on numbers from the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

#### **Finance Update (Paper BS 006)**

21. The Commission noted the Finance Update.

#### **Future meetings (oral)**

22. The Commission provisionally agreed to meet again in early February 2022.

#### **Any other business**

23. There was no other business.