

**Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland**

**Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh  
Monday 04 December 2017**

**Present**

Mr R Hinds, Chair  
Prof. A Henderson, Deputy Chair  
Mr R Bean  
Dr S Walker

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

Maria McCann, Scottish Government Elections Team (present for the first 4 items only)  
Alex Mowat, Scottish Government Elections Team (present for the first 4 items only)

**Declaration of Interests**

1. There were no changes to any declarations previously given.

**Minutes of previous meeting**

2. The Commission approved the minutes of the 12 September 2017 meeting.

**Matters arising**

3. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**Update from Scottish Government on Electoral Reform Consultation**

4. Maria McCann and Alex Mowat of the Scottish Government Elections Team provided an update on the broad content of the Scottish Government's public consultation on Electoral Reform, which they advised was planned to be launched before the end of 2017 and would last 12 weeks. Areas likely to be particularly relevant to the Commission's work were: term lengths for the Scottish Parliament; changes to the electoral franchise; rolling reviews of local government electoral arrangements, the role of Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Parliament in making changes to the Commission's recommendations, and the number of councillors to be elected to local government wards.
5. The Commission noted the update and asked Scottish Government officials for any further information on the implications across Scotland of changes to the franchise.
6. The Commission agreed that it would respond to the public consultation, and the Secretary advised that she would circulate a copy of the consultation to the Commission when published.

**Business Update**

7. The Chair and the other Commissioners congratulated Prof. Henderson on being appointed as the new Deputy Chair. Prof. Henderson has been appointed to the role for a four year term, which commenced on 1 December 2017.
8. The Commission noted that Prof. Henderson's appointment creates a vacant post on the Commission. The Commission discussed the timescale for filling this vacancy, and the long-standing unfilled Commissioner post, and agreed that given the Commission's expected workload it should seek to fill both vacancies. The Commission asked the Secretary to investigate the possibility of staggering the appointments, without incurring the expense of two rounds of advertising, with a view to retaining corporate knowledge when the terms of the current Commissioners expire.
9. The Secretary updated the Commission on the meeting that she and the Chair had held with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in November.
10. The Commission noted that it is still awaiting the expected ministerial direction which would restrict the scope of administrative reviews undertaken under section 14(2) of the 1973 Act, to those affecting no more than 500 electors.
11. The Secretariat advised the Commission that a draft order is expected to be laid before the Scottish Parliament next week to implement the Commission's recommendations as a result of the Administrative Review at Keltybridge. The Order is expected to come into effect in February 2018.
12. The Secretary advised the Commission that responsibility for sponsorship of the Commission within the Scottish Government had changed from the Local Government Policy and Relationships Unit to the Elections Team as of 1 December 2017.
13. The Secretary advised the Commission that the initial attempts to recruit for a new B1 post had been suspended, largely for administrative reasons, and that the post would be re-advertised within the Scottish Government in the new year.
14. The Secretariat updated the Commission on the progress of its plan to refresh and rebrand the Commission's website. The Scottish Government Digital Team are assisting the Secretariat in the management of the process, and the Secretariat is planning user testing of the Commission's existing website to gain feedback from members of the public.
15. The Secretary reported on the progress of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's (BCS) 2018 Review of UK Parliament boundaries. The consultation on Revised Proposals is due to end on 11 December 2017, and the Commission is due to submit its final recommendations by September 2018 as specified in legislation.

**Scottish Parliament Review timing (Paper LGBCS 2426)**

16. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2426, and the information provided by the Elections Team on the Scottish Government's consultation on Electoral Reform. In considering its options, the Commission discussed the uncertainty over the timing of future Scottish Parliament elections, and potential changes to

the electoral franchise. It also noted the tight timescale available for completing any review in time for implementation by 2021.

17. The Commission agreed to delay the commencement of the Scottish Parliament Review and to plan now on the basis of Option 2, in which the Review would report by May 2022 at the latest. This replaced its decision of 12 September to commence the Review immediately and complete in time for the 2021 election. It agreed to keep the position under review and to consider whether it wished to seek an extension of the May 2022 deadline, once the outcomes of the consultation are known.

#### **Islands (Scotland) Bill: Oral Update**

18. The Secretary provided an oral update on the Islands (Scotland) Bill, noting that the Bill had completed Stage 1 in the Scottish Parliament, and that a report is expected by the end of January, with a debate scheduled in early February 2018. She advised that the evidence submitted to Parliament had mostly been positive about the additional flexibility over councillor numbers for island wards; but some caution had been sounded about unintended consequences, particularly for council areas which are part-mainland / part-island.
19. She advised that concern had been expressed during the Commission's evidence session about whether the costs estimates for the Islands Reviews as set out in the Bill's Financial Memorandum would be sufficient and this was something the Secretariat would review.

#### **Islands (Scotland) Bill: approach to consultation (Paper LGBCS 2427) and councillor number methodology (Paper LGBCS 2429)**

20. The Commission held preliminary discussions on its approach to consultations and its methodology for determining councillor numbers for the Islands Reviews.
21. The Commission considered that, compared to consultation on ward design, public consultation on councillor numbers had been of limited value in the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements and asked the Secretariat to provide an analysis of number of responses received during the consultation. The Commission noted that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England do not consult the public on councillor numbers.
22. The Commission considered that the views of local residents would be of great importance in recommending boundaries in remote communities and took the view that a two-stage process of public consultation on initial and revised boundary proposals would likely be beneficial in developing its recommendations.
23. The Commission discussed the means by which it would consult during the Islands Reviews and agreed to consider local meetings, to explore the use of social media with a targeted geographical focus, as well as the possibility of direct mailing to households. The Commission also agreed to consider direct contact with community councils, citizens' panels or other relevant local bodies. In these cases the Commission would seek council guidance on the local groups to contact. It asked the Secretariat to consider existing consultation forums that may be relevant.
24. The Commission was mindful of the need to manage expectations in regard to the reviews, as it would be constrained by the requirements of electoral parity

across the whole of each council area, and that the electorate of some inhabited islands would be too small to be entitled to a councillor representing them only.

25. The Commission agreed that, building on the research into councillor role and workload, it was broadly comfortable with the councillor number methodology suggested in paper LGBCS 2429, though it would give further consideration to the role of councils in suggesting what its number of councillors should be and why. The Commission agreed to consider a degree of flexibility on the number of councillors a council may have in order to assist with ward design, noting that it used such flexibility a number of times during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews, and asked the Secretariat to liaise further with LGBCS over its use of CIPFA benchmarking.

#### **Review of the administrative area boundary between Glasgow City Council and North Lanarkshire Council at Cardowan by Steps (LGBCS Paper 2428)**

26. The Commission considered the views expressed during the public consultation and the high level of engagement of local residents, and the level of support for inclusion of the area specified in LGBCS Paper 2428, within North Lanarkshire council area. The Commission noted the lack of development linking the area in question to the rest of Glasgow City council area since the last review of boundary in the area in 2009, and gave particular weight to the fact that the area would still remain isolated from the rest of Glasgow City council area if the development suggested by Glasgow City Council were to take place.
27. The Commission noted the views expressed by Glasgow City Council and North Lanarkshire Council and considered the interests of community and local ties. It decided to recommend that in the interests of effective and convenient local government the area be included in North Lanarkshire council area.
28. The Secretariat asked the Secretariat to prepare a report of its recommendations for submission to the Minister for Parliamentary Business, and to plan to inform Glasgow City Council and North Lanarkshire Council and local residents once this report is submitted.

#### **Risk register (Paper LGBCS 2430)**

29. The Commission agreed to defer consideration of the Risk Register until its next meeting.

#### **UK Boundaries Commissions Meeting (Paper LGBCS 2431)**

30. The Secretary updated the Commission on the meeting that she, the Chair, and Prof. Henderson (on behalf of the Boundary Commission for Scotland), had attended in Cardiff in November. The Secretary and Commissioners who attended Cardiff, and previous annual meetings, noted that while the discussions had been useful, they felt that changes could be made to the structure and timing to make them more productive. The Commission noted that it is due to jointly host the next meeting in November 2018 with the Boundary Commission for Scotland, and asked the Secretary to contact the other UK Boundaries Commissions to discuss changes to the format.

#### **Commission rebranding: logo (oral)**

31. The Commission viewed a variety of logos and selected its preferred option but requested a variation of the colour palette. The Boundary Commission for

Scotland is due to meet next week, and both Commissions hope to adopt similar, but distinct logos.

**Finance Update (Paper LGBCS 2425)**

32. The Commission noted the current financial position.
33. The Commission asked the Secretariat to consult with its sponsor department about possible return of the forecast underspend shown in Appendix A. The Commission also asked the Secretariat to consider whether any further training outside that provided by the Scottish Government was required and which should be budgeted for.

**Future Meetings (oral)**

34. The Commission provisionally agreed to meet on a 6 weekly basis until summer 2018, with the first meeting to be scheduled in mid-February.

**Any Other Business**

35. There was no other business.