

## Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

### Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh Monday 3 December 2018

#### Present

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

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

#### Declaration of Interests

1. There were no declarations of interest.

#### Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 30 October 2018 without amendment.

#### Matters arising

3. The Chair welcomed new Commissioner Gordon Macmillan to his first meeting. The Chair advised that another newly appointed Commissioner will take up post in Spring 2019.
4. The Secretary advised the Commission that it had now received a Direction from Scottish Ministers: that the Commission should not conduct reviews of council area boundaries under section 14 (2) of the 1973 Act, other than reviews which would directly affect no more than 500 electors. This Direction ends on 30 September 2023.
5. The Secretary updated the Commission on the project to update the Commission's website, including contingency planning.
6. The Secretary advised that she had been in touch with the Scottish Government regarding the publication of the Order to implement the recommendations of Administrative Review of the boundary between Glasgow City council area and North Lanarkshire council area at Cardowan. Scottish Government advised they have now contacted all stakeholders to advise that the new boundary will be effective from 1 April 2019.
7. The Secretary advised the Commission that the results of the Scottish Government's consultation on communities, "Democracy Matters", are expected to be published in March or April of 2019, and that she would keep the Commission informed.

8. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat is awaiting the publication of electorate data for December 2018 before preparing a paper on Interim Reviews of electoral arrangements for local authority areas.
9. The Secretary advised the Commission that she had sought Scottish Government advice on any risks which may arise from the UK's leaving the European Union, and had not yet received a reply. She advised that she will continue to pursue this and update the Risk Register accordingly.

### **Business Update**

10. The Secretary advised that she would be meeting Penny Curtis, the new Head of the Scottish Government's Elections and FOI team. She was also due to attend a meeting with the Scottish Government's Elections Team and Local Government Team, both of which are stakeholders in the work of the Commission, to assist in maintaining effective communication. The Chair reported that he had already met Dr Curtis and discussed with her the importance of maintaining contact between the Commission and Local Government colleagues and the need for the Secretariat to have access to training and development opportunities within the wider civil service.

### **Electoral Reform (Oral Update)**

11. The Secretary updated the Commission on the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform work. A Bill is now expected in the New Year and it was anticipated that this would take forward a number of issues of relevance to the Commission. The Chair noted that the Commission had communicated its views to Scottish Ministers on the importance of preserving its independence and discussion with the Minister at the UK dinner suggested that there had been further thinking around the role of Ministers and the Scottish Parliament in approving recommendations.

### **Islands Reviews (Oral Update)**

12. The Secretary summarised the steps taken so far in beginning the Islands Reviews.
13. The Commission discussed when to make a formal announcement of the commencement of the Reviews and how to go about publicising this. It was agreed to move the announcement from December to the first week in January, as it was thought that it would be more likely to receive more news coverage at that time. It was noted that the Chair has agreed to undertake an interview with Holyrood magazine to publicise the start of the Islands Reviews. He would also be discussing the Islands Reviews on a podcast with the Local Government Information Unit. The Commission highlighted the importance of local media, including local radio, and asked the Secretariat to discuss publicising the Reviews with council officials.
14. The Commission agreed that there would be Lead Commissioners for each of the council areas being reviewed, and asked the Secretariat to suggest an allocation of responsibility.
15. The Commission discussed whether it would present more than one option in its consultation with councils, or whether it would consult on the basis of a single proposal per council area, as in the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews of Electoral Arrangements. The Commission agreed to decide on this matter at its next meeting.

**2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Shetland Islands council area (Paper LGBCS 2462)**

16. The Commission discussed the options for Shetland Islands council area. It noted that Option 2 and Option 3 have Whalsay and Skerries as a 1–member ward and Yell, Fetlar and Unst as a 2–member ward, rather than being grouped in a 3–member North Isles ward where they are currently placed (in Option 4) and were proposed to remain in the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews (in Option 1). The Commission considered that this may be an improvement to the existing arrangements as they are not directly connected by ferry.
17. The Commission noted that Option 3’s use of localities, which the council uses for community planning and health care, and which follow community council area boundaries, could aid effective and convenient local government. It asked the Secretariat to quantify, if possible, the extent to which Option 2 (which has fewer wards which vary from electoral parity by more than 10% than Option 3), differs from the localities used by the council.
18. The Commission asked the Secretariat to present the options again at the next meeting, with further analysis as noted, and after discussions with council officials.

**2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Orkney Islands council area (Paper LGBCS 2463)**

19. The Commission discussed the options, and noted that the council wished for minimal change to councillor numbers and ward boundaries.
20. The Commission noted that the existing North Isles 3–member ward, which has a large variation from parity, could now be a 2–member ward (with one fewer councillor for the council as a whole) using the Commission’s new powers and thereby be within 10% variance from electoral parity. The Commission also noted the limited transport links of the area, and that special geographic circumstances may apply.
21. The Commission asked the Secretariat to discuss the options with council officials and investigate additional options for the North Isles which would involve the creation of 1 or 2 member wards, possibly linking some of the islands to the Mainland.

**2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Nah–Eileanan an Iar council area (Paper LGBCS 2464)**

22. The Commission discussed the options and noted that Options 2 and 3 consider local ties in Barra, South Uist and North Uist and Option 3 creates a Harris ward, rather including Harris in a ward with part of Lewis.
23. The Commission did not request that the Secretariat develop new options at this stage, and asked the Secretariat to discuss the options with council officials, including the identification of suitable Gaelic names for wards.
24. The Commission agreed to consider all three papers further at the next meeting

**Administrative Review Request – Howe Road (Paper LGBCS 2465)**

25. The Commission discussed the correspondence concerning the request by Jamie Hepburn MSP for an Administrative Area Review of the boundary between North Lanarkshire council area and East Dunbartonshire council area, at Howe Road, by Kilsyth.
26. The Commission considered that in the light of there being inter-council co-operation over the maintenance of Howe Road, and no electors being affected by the position of the boundary there, that there was not a compelling reason to consider amending the boundary. The Commission agreed that it would reconsider the matter if further evidence is presented to it.
27. The Commission asked the Secretariat to write to Jamie Hepburn MSP setting out the Commission's position.

### **UK Commissions Meeting (Paper LGBCS 2466)**

28. The Commission noted the report on the UK Commissions Meeting held in Edinburgh in November 2018 and jointly hosted by the Boundary Commission for Scotland and the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland.
29. The Commissioners who attended the recent meeting in November considered that it had been of value, particularly the presentation by Professor Pattie on delimiting communities, and the opportunity to hear and discuss with members of other Commissions the lessons learned from the recently completed 2018 UK Parliamentary Review.
30. The Commission discussed the recent UK Commissions Meeting, and whether annual UK Commissions Meetings, in the current format, represent value for money. This was in the context of concerns raised by the Boundary Commission for England, which is due to host the next year's meeting, but expects to be otherwise inactive in 2019.
31. The Commission also noted that previous meetings had influenced its consideration of rolling reviews and equality and diversity, and that new Commissioners had found the meetings particularly valuable.
32. The Commission considered that overall the meetings were helpful, but that the Commissions may wish to consider a different structure for the meeting in order to maximise value for money. The Chair asked the Secretary to liaise with the other Commissions to progress the 2019 meeting.

### **Draft Corporate Plan (Paper LGBCS 2467)**

33. The Commission discussed the Draft Corporate Plan, and approved it, with some amendments. The Commission asked the Secretariat work with the Sponsor Team in the Scottish Government to ensure that the plan can be published prior to the 2019–20 financial year.

### **Finance Update (Paper LGBCS 2468)**

34. The Commission noted the Finance Update. The Commission asked the Secretariat to review the financial position in January, and ask the Sponsor Team if they wish the Commission to return any funds.

### **Future Meetings (oral)**

35. The Commission confirmed that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The Commission decided to agree the start time and arrange subsequent meetings in the first part of 2019 by email.

**Any other business**

36. No other business was discussed.