

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh at 10:00am on Tuesday, 23 July 2019

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
Mrs Y Croll
Mr D Logue

Declaration of Interests

1. The Commission stated declarations of interest on agenda item 7 (Paper LGBCS 2491): the Chair, Mr Bean and Mr Macmillan owned property in Perth and Kinross council area; the Deputy Chair owned property in Stirling council area; and Dr Walker noted a close family member was about to register at the University of St Andrews. The Secretary will research guidance on declarations of interests and will provide an update at the next Commission meeting.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 17 June 2019 with minor amendments.

Matters arising

3. The Secretary informed the Commission of recent progress in refreshing the Commission's website.
4. The Commission discussed the upcoming UK Commissions meeting to be held in London on 28 and 29 November 2019 and hosted by the Boundary Commission for England. The Chair agreed to represent the Commission and it was agreed that another two Commissioners would attend. The Secretary will liaise with Commissioners by correspondence to consider availability and attendance.
5. The Secretary informed the Commission that she will meet with the Electoral Commission on 6 September 2019. The Commission asked the Secretary to further research student registration practice in Scotland and suggested that this should be added as a topic to the UK Commissions meeting agenda in November.
6. The Secretary updated the Commission on the Judicial Review concerning the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland's (BCNI) 2018 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies. The Boundary Commission for Scotland had

discussed and agreed at their recent meeting a response to the BCNI's letter regarding the ongoing Judicial Review.

7. The Secretary asked the Commission to contact her with any further comments on the fees and expenses claims guidance document.

Business Update

8. The Secretary noted the introduction of the Referendums (Scotland) Bill and the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill.
9. The Secretary advised the Commission of the upcoming Shetland Islands Scottish Parliament by-election, scheduled for 29 August 2019.
10. The Secretary agreed that she will liaise with the Scottish Government sponsorship team to consider if the Scottish Government's Brexit preparations are likely to have any impact on legislative timetables.

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Public Consultation (Paper LGBCS 2489)

11. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2489 and agreed to defer the public consultation by one week in order to avoid a clash with the Scottish Parliament by-election in Shetland. The 12 week public consultation will now take place from Monday 2 September until 25 November.
12. The Commission agreed to issue a separate press release for each council area and asked that the Secretariat make some changes to the style, format and tone prior to publication.
13. The Commission discussed the draft posters created by APS and agreed on minor amendments to ensure posters are clear and concise for all audiences.
14. The Secretary advised the Commission that she will check with Scottish Government if there is training available for the Secretariat on preparing press releases.
15. The Commission discussed the guidance booklet and asked the Secretariat to make minor changes to ensure clarity and simplicity prior to publication.
16. The Commission agreed it would be available to attend the next Association of Shetland Community Councils meeting, scheduled for September 2019. The Secretariat will liaise with Shetland Islands Council to make arrangements and then seek Commissioners' availability for attendance.
17. The Deputy Chair asked the Secretariat to share details of the proposed consultation questions so she can offer further advice.

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas (Paper LGBCS 2490)

18. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2490 and agreed with the proposed timetable for the Reviews. It also agreed to consider Initial Proposal options with and without 2 and 5 member designs, in addition to the flexibility offered by the

Islands (Scotland) Act to use 1 and 2 member wards where there are inhabited islands.

Interim Reviews of Electoral Arrangements (Paper LGBCS 2491)

19. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2491 and asked the Secretariat to engage with councils to help clarify the reasons for the high variation from electoral parity for some wards. The Secretariat will present an updated paper at the next meeting once further analysis has been sought from the councils.

Administrative Area Reviews – boundary anomalies (Paper LGBCS 2492)

20. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2492 and the four areas where an administrative boundary either cuts across a building/ dwelling or no longer follows physical ground features. The Commission asked the Secretariat to write to Midlothian Council and Scottish Borders Council to seek further clarification on their position regarding planning permission for Creon Cottage, near Leadburn. The Secretariat will update the Commission at its next meeting. The Commission will then consider whether to conduct reviews of administrative area boundaries in each of the affected council areas.

Electoral Reform: oral update

21. The Commission discussed the impact of the uncertainties around the expected Electoral Reform legislation and agreed to consider further after publication of the Bill. The Secretary will keep the Commission informed of any developments.

Electoral Reform: presentation of reports (Paper LGBCS 2493)

22. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2493 and asked the Secretariat to develop for discussion at a future meeting a template Electoral Review report based on these suggestions, using a report from the 5th Reviews as its basis.

Electoral Reform: international boundary making (Paper LGBCS 2494)

23. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2494 and noted the types of objections to independent boundary commissions' recommendations raised by members of legislative assemblies or parliaments in their debates on whether to implement those recommendations. The Commission noted that despite the objections of some members, the commissions' recommendations were normally implemented in full by the legislative assemblies or parliaments.

Scottish Parliament Interim Review – (Paper LGBCS 2495)

24. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2495 and agreed the provisional timetable for the Review. The Commission will write to the Boundary Commission for Scotland to inform them of the Review.

Risk Register (Paper LGBCS 2496)

25. The Commission discussed the Risk Register and made some minor amendments.
26. The Commission asked the Secretary to add a specific additional risk covering Brexit as well as an additional risk for a possible UK general election and delays to website refresh.

Finance Update (Paper LGBCS 2497)

27. The Commission noted the latest Finance Update.

Future meetings (oral update)

28. The Commission noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 11 September 2019. The Secretariat was asked to canvass further meeting dates for October, December and January, avoiding Monday meetings in winter months.

Any other business

29. There was no other business.