

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh at 14:00pm on Tuesday 29 October 2019

Present

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

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

Apologies

Mr J Collins

Declaration of Interests

1. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 11 September 2019 without amendments.

Matters arising

3. The Commission discussed the upcoming UK Commissions meeting to be held in London on 28 and 29 November 2019. The Chair, Mr Bean and Mr Macmillan will represent the Commission. The Secretary awaited a draft agenda for the meeting but advised that she had flagged the Commission's interest in discussing electoral registration. It was agreed that all Commissioners attending would contribute to the discussions and allocation of topics would be agreed once the agenda is available.
4. The Secretary advised the Commission that she would continue to monitor Brexit developments as part of ongoing risk-assessment. The Commission agreed to review the Risk Register at its next meeting in December.
5. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Secretariat is working with Scottish Government to clarify issues around expenses, and would provide an update at a future meeting.

Business Update

6. The Commission congratulated Professor Ailsa Henderson on her re-appointment as a member of the Boundary Commission for Scotland for a further 4 year term.
7. The Commission were given an update on the recent meeting with Highland Council that took place on 8 October 2019 regarding the upcoming review of electoral arrangements. Meetings have been scheduled for Argyll and Bute

Council on 31 October 2019 and North Ayrshire Council on 17 December 2019. Updates on those meetings will be provided at later meetings.

8. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Chair would be giving evidence on the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government Committee on 6 November 2019 and the Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary would give evidence to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee on 21 November.
9. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Chair and Deputy Chair have a meeting arranged with the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans on 13 November 2019 and will provide an update at the next Commission meeting.
10. The Secretary advised that she has been invited to attend future meetings of the Elections Management Board.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Na h–Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands Council areas (oral update)

11. The Secretariat updated the Commission on responses received to date on the 12-week public consultation on the Commission's proposals for Na h–Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands council areas. The Commission agreed to issue a further news release 4 weeks before the consultation closes on 2 December 2019.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas – methodology for determining councillor numbers (Paper LGBCS 2502)

12. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2502 and considered its approach on methodology for determining councillor numbers for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire. The Commission asked for designs based on the range of options identified in the paper.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas – ward design approach (Paper LGBCS 2503)

13. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2503 and noted the timetable for the reviews. The Commission considered its approach on ward design and asked the Secretariat to prepare and present some options at the next meeting including 2 and 5 member wards. The Commission agreed to continue its flexible approach in each area noting the special geographic considerations that apply to island and rural communities.

Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill 2019 – draft written evidence (Paper LGBCS 2504)

14. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2504 and suggested amendments. The Secretary agreed to clear the final paper with the Chair and Deputy Chair before submission by 7 November.

Scottish Parliament interim review (oral update)

15. The Commission was given an update on consultation responses received to date regarding the review and noted that no specific issues had been raised that were directly relevant to the terms of the review although some respondents had made points regarding provision of local government services.

Administrative area review – Midlothian and Borders (oral update)

16. The Secretariat advised that Scottish Borders Council had reported that it was liaising with Midlothian Council with regards to retrospective planning permission for Creon Cottage near Leadburn. On that basis the Commission agreed not to undertake a review of the administrative area boundary at this time.

Strategy seminar options (Paper LGBCS 2505)

17. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2505 and discussed options for possible aims, themes, format and participants for future events. The Commission agreed that events would be linked by an overall theme of “effective and convenient local government”. The Commission asked the Secretariat to prepare a paper for its next meeting outlining ideas for an initial event exploring multi-member wards.

Electoral registration – students (Paper LGBCS 2506)

18. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2506 and asked the Secretary to find out more about activity in Scotland to encourage student registration in particular and to liaise with the Scottish Government Elections team in the first instance.

22. The Secretariat would email the Commission a link to the Scottish Government’s recently commissioned research on short-term lets for their information.

Finance update (Paper LGBCS 2507)

19. The Commission noted the latest Finance Update.

Future meetings (oral update)

20. The Commission confirmed that its next meeting would be held on 10 December 2019. The Secretariat will liaise with Commissioners to confirm meeting dates for late January and late February 2020.

Any other business

21. The Secretariat advised that meeting papers considering responses to the 12-week public consultation for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands council areas may be issued late as the consultation closes on 2 December 2019.