

Minutes of Meeting held at Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh at 10am on Tuesday 4 February 2020

Present

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

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

Declaration of Interests

1. There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of previous meeting

2. The Commission approved the minutes of the meeting on 10 December 2019 without amendments.

Matters arising

3. The Secretary advised the Commission that she would be speaking to Shereen Williams, Chief Executive at the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to discuss the Elections (Wales) Bill being considered by the National Assembly for Wales, and the implications of councils choosing first-past-the-post or the single-transferrable vote system for their elections. She will feedback views to the Commission at the next meeting.
4. The Secretary advised the Commission that there is uncertainty about the timing of the Boundary Commission for Scotland's 2023 Review of UK Parliament Constituencies with which the Commission shares the Secretariat. The Secretary will monitor the resource implications for the LGBCS and advise the Commission of any changes once they are known.
5. At its December 2019 meeting the Commission discussed the new methods of digital engagement it had used during the public consultation on the Islands-only council areas and asked the Secretariat to present an analysis of this at a future meeting. A paper will be brought to the next Commission meeting.
6. The Secretary updated the Commission that she is currently seeking advice from Scottish Government about how the Commission would go about obtaining standing legal advice, via the Scottish Government Procurement Framework.
7. The Commission noted correspondence from North Lanarkshire Council on their views of the issues raised by some respondents in relation to access to local schools during the recent public consultation on the Interim Review of Scottish Parliament Boundaries at Cardowan by Steps. The Commission asked the Secretariat to notify Scottish Government officials of the response received from North Lanarkshire Council.

8. The Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary updated the Commission on recent discussions in relation to holding an event on multi-member wards in the Autumn. The Commission agreed that the Chair, Deputy Chair and Secretary would progress arrangements including contacting key stakeholders for preliminary discussions.
9. The Secretary informed the Commission that the next meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions will be hosted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 26 and 27 November 2020 in London. Commissioners and the Secretariat were asked to consider how best to maximize the benefits of participation at these meetings.
10. The Secretary informed the Commission that a paper on Risk Register will be brought to the next meeting.

Business Update

11. The Secretary advised the Commission that Taylor Mackenzie are undertaking work to evaluate users' experience of the consultation hub to help inform future public consultations. A report with recommendations on improvements to the consultations will be produced to assist the next round of public consultations for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire council areas.

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Shetland Islands council area (Paper LGBCS 2515)

12. The Commission discussed the responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Shetland Islands council area and whether it wished to make amendments to the Initial Proposals. After discussion, and taking into account all the evidence, the Commission agreed to adopt the alternative suggestion from Shetland Islands Council (Appendix D) as its Final Recommendations. The Shetland Islands Council suggestion:
 - retains the existing three-member North Isles ward which includes the islands of Yell, Unst and Fetlar in the north with Whalsay and Bruray. Although there are no direct ferry links between all of these islands, it was felt the islands have more in common with each other than communities on the mainland;
 - retains the existing Shetland North ward boundary to avoid breaking local community ties between Delting and Voe and also retain the existing North isles ward as described above;
 - places Gulberwick within a Shetland South ward to improve variation from electoral parity within both the Lerwick South and Shetland South wards. Placing Gulberwick within a Shetland South ward was suggested by Shetland Islands Council and two local Community Councils;
 - retains the Commission's proposed boundary between Lerwick South and Lerwick North wards, which retains the existing ward boundary;
 - adopt the Commission's proposals to rename the Lerwick North ward as Lerwick North and Bressay; and
 - accepts the proposed boundary between the Shetland West and Shetland Central wards which follow recognised boundaries and natural features.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Orkney Islands council area (Paper LGBCS 2516)

13. The Commission discussed the responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Orkney Islands

council area and whether it wished to make amendments to the Initial Proposals. After discussion and taking into account all the evidence the Commission agreed to adopt without amendment the Initial Proposals (Appendix C) as its Final Recommendations. The proposals:

- minimised change to the existing ward boundaries. They retained three existing ward boundaries: North Isles; Stromness and South Isles; and West Mainland;
- made changes to ward boundaries by Kirkwall only. The boundary between the two Kirkwall wards is amended by Kirkwall harbour to create a more easily identifiable ward boundary. The Kirkwall East ward boundary is extended southwards to better reflect local ties. It places Kirkwall airport within a Kirkwall ward;
- retained the existing North Isles ward with a wide variation from electoral parity to better reflect local communities and the special geographical circumstances in the ward due to it comprising of rural, sparsely populated islands with limited transport links; and
- retained the existing ward names

2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Na h–Eileanan an Iar council area (Paper LGBCS 2517)

14. The Commission discussed the responses to the public consultation on its Initial Proposals for the 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Na h–Eileanan an Iar council area. The Commission asked the Secretariat to further consider a 2–member Barra ward with an overall total of either 28 or 29 councillors and whether to link Barra with Eriskay.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Argyll and Bute council area (Paper LGBCS 2518)

15. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2518 and agreed a number of approaches to consider when developing ward design options. It asked the Secretariat to informally discuss these approaches with Argyll and Bute Council before bringing an options paper to the next meeting.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – North Ayrshire council area (Paper LGBCS 2519)

16. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2519 and agreed a number of approaches to consider when developing ward design options. It asked the Secretariat to informally discuss these approaches with North Ayrshire Council before bringing an options paper to the next meeting.

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Highland council area (Paper LGBCS 2520)

17. The Commission discussed Paper LGBCS 2520 and agreed a number of approaches to consider when developing ward design options. It asked the Secretariat to informally discuss these approaches with Highland Council before bringing an options paper to the next meeting.

Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill (Paper LGBCS 2521)

18. The Secretary updated the Commission on the progress of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill which, if passed will have implications for the scheduling and conduct of future Scottish Parliament and local authority electoral reviews. The Secretary informed the Commission that she will continue to monitor progress of the Bill and provide a further report after stage one.

Corporate Plan (Paper LGBCS 2522)

19. The Commission discussed the draft Corporate Plan, and agreed that it was satisfied that it could reduce the overall forecast to no more than £437,000 in 2020–21. The Commission agreed that it could make the savings required by rescheduling academic research; and by reducing funds set aside for items such as newspaper advertising and public meetings or local inquiries, without removing any items of spending in their entirety. The Commission also agreed to incorporate a provision for Legal Costs within the Corporate Plan.
20. The Commission agreed that the Secretariat would revise the draft Corporate Plan to reflect this, and after confirmation from the Chair, would submit it to the Commission's Sponsor Division within the Scottish Government.

Finance update (Paper LGBCS 2523)

21. The Commission noted the latest finance update.

Future meetings (oral update)

22. The Commission confirmed that its next meeting would be held on 7 April 2020, and asked the Secretariat to liaise with Commissioners to determine the date of its subsequent meetings.

Any other business

23. There was no other business.