

**Minutes of Meeting held by videolink at 10am on Wednesday 14 April 2021****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

**Apologies:**

None.

**Declaration of Interests**

1. There were no declarations of interest.

**Minutes of previous meeting**

2. The Commission suggested a number of amendments to the minutes of the meeting on 11 March 2021 which it asked to be re-circulated for approval.

**Matters arising**

3. The Secretary updated the Commission that the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life are taking no further action on the letter of complaint regarding the submission of multiple responses from a single individual to the consultation on the Initial Proposals for Argyll and Bute council area. The Commission agreed the Chair would write to Scottish Government regarding the Code of Conduct and that the Secretary will draft a letter of complaint to the councillor responsible for submitting multiple responses.
4. The Commission were informed of the steps the Secretariat will take to ensure a smooth transition when the name of the Commission changes to "Boundaries Scotland" in May. A letter has been drafted to send to stakeholders, which the Secretary will circulate to Commissioners for approval.

**Business Update**

5. The Secretary advised the Commission that the Scottish Government have advised that there will be no return to offices for civil servants until the end of June at the earliest.

**2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements – final recommendations for Highland council area (Paper LGBCS 2557)**

6. The Commission gave further consideration to its final recommendations for Highland Council.
7. The Commission considered Option 1 and a variation to Option 1 which included a 4-member Caithness ward. The Commission acknowledged the strong opposition during the public consultation both to the proposed ward boundaries and to councillor numbers in Caithness and Sutherland. As both of these options

retained the proposed ward boundaries in Caithness and Sutherland, the Commission did not consider Option 1 and the alternative Option 1 further.

8. The Commission considered Caithness and Sutherland Option 2 which retained the existing ward boundaries in the area, with the exception of a change at Edderton, with a total of 14 councillors. The Commission believed that forecast variation from electoral parity in the proposed North, West and Central Sutherland ward was unacceptably high at -39%.
9. The Commission considered Caithness and Sutherland Option 3 which retained the existing ward boundaries in the area with the exception of a change at Edderton, with a total of 13 councillors. The Commission agreed that Option 3 offered improved variation from parity, within Caithness and Sutherland and across the council area. The Commission believed there would be some support for retaining the existing ward boundaries in this area and agreed to adopt Option 3 as its final proposals, subject to the Secretariat considering any minor ward boundary changes between wards 1 and 4 to improve variation from electoral parity.
10. The Commission then considered suggestions and comments on possible minor changes to ward boundaries across the council area.
11. The Commission noted that the ward boundary suggestions in Inverness aligned with community council boundaries but worsened variation from electoral parity. The Commission also noted the suggestions for Lochalsh, the Cromarty Firth ward boundary at Alness and Mountgerald, and the Tain ward boundary. However, it considered that no compelling arguments were made which would lead it to amend its Initial Proposals for these wards.
12. The Commission agreed to adopt the suggestions to amend the ward boundaries by Laggan, to follow the Cairngorm National Park boundary, and to follow the historical Caithness and Sutherland county boundary. Neither suggestion affected any electors.
13. The Commission discussed alternative suggestions to amend boundaries within the proposed Fort Augustus, Knoydart and Dingwall and Seaforth wards. It was agreed the Secretariat would consider alternative historical or more easily identifiable boundaries and provide the Commission with a further paper outlining its findings to enable the Commission to make a final decision on any further boundary amendments.
14. The Commission considered the various suggestions in other parts of the council area and were content that no compelling arguments were made which would lead it to amend its Initial Proposals for these wards.
15. The Commission were content that the ward names in the Initial Proposals were descriptive of the proposed wards while being reasonably short.
16. The Commission agreed that Option 3 offered the best option for electoral arrangements in the Highland council area and agreed to adopt them as their Final Recommendations, subject to confirmation after review of the alternatives remitted to the Secretariat for further consideration.

**2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements – Final report template (Paper LGBCS 2558)**

17. The Commission considered the Final Report template in Paper LGBCS 2558, and asked the Secretariat to make a number of amendments. It also asked the Secretariat to undertake further discussions with Harper Macleod Solicitors to clarify some issues. The Commission asked the Secretariat to prepare a report on a different council area to allow fuller consideration of issues which may arise.

**Request for Administrative Area Review of Angus council area and Dundee City council area boundaries at Liff (Paper LGBCS 2559)**

18. The Commission considered Paper LGBCS 2559 and the follow-up request for an administrative area boundary review between Angus council area and Dundee City council area a Church Road, Liff. The Commission agreed that there was insufficient evidence provided in the follow-up request to suggest that a review of the council area boundary in this location would be in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

**Appointments (oral update)**

19. The Secretary advised that the Scottish Government have agreed that the Chair can sit on the selection panel when appointing a new Chair and Commission members. Recruitment of the new Chair and two new Commissioners will take place simultaneously. Scottish Government officials will liaise with the Chair over arrangements.

**Finance Update (Paper LGBCS 2560)**

20. The Commission noted the Finance update.

**Future meetings (oral update)**

21. The Commission agreed to meet again on Thursday 13 May 2021.

**Any other business**

22. There was no other business.