

BCW/2021/ 1st Meeting

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

Minutes of the meeting at 16:30 on Tuesday 26th January 2021 via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Mrs Justice Jefford	Deputy Chair
Aaron Sollis	Assessor (Ordnance Survey)
Huw Vaughan Thomas	Commissioner
Sam Hartley	Commissioner
Shereen Williams	Commission Secretary
Tom Jenkins	Commission Secretariat
Rhydian Fitter	Commission Secretariat
David Carr	Commission Secretariat

Time Started: 16:30

Time Finished: 17:40

1. INTRODUCTION, OPENING REMARKS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1. The Deputy Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Rhydian Fitter to the Commission.
- 1.2. There were no declarations of interest made.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1. There were apologies for absence for Neil Park Assessor (ONS)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1. The Commission **agreed** the minutes from the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st December 2020 subject to minor amendments.

4. ISSUES ARISING

- 4.1. The Secretary provided updates on Issues arising from the Commission meeting of the 15 September 2020.

Issue 1 - Staffing Update

- 4.2. The new Communications and Engagement Manager, Rhydian Fitter, had started at the beginning of January. The interviews for the two Team Support roles (AO grade) had been completed and it was expected that they would start on 1 March 2021.

Issue 2 – Use of Video Conferencing for Public Hearings

- 4.3. Discussions with BCE regarding the live streaming of hearings were ongoing. Legal advice received by the Secretariat was that there could be a problem with recordings of evidence given at hearings which were put on the Commission's web site should the individual who gave the evidence withdraw their consent for the recording to be made public.

Issue 3 – Sharing of ONS Data

- 4.4. It was considered that the process of the sharing of ONS data between the four Commissions should be changed in future to make it automatic rather than requiring it be requested.

5. RISK REGISTER

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the report dated January 2021 by the HP&P and it was **noted** that the changes agreed and the last meeting had been made.
- 5.2. In respect of BCW 4 it was reported that the Secretariat had received a quote from a recruitment agency for undertaking the recruitment of Assistant Commissioners for the public hearings. The Commission considered that the quote was significantly higher than expected. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would give further consideration to alternative arrangements for the recruitment of Assistant Commissioners.
- 5.3. The risk register was approved subject to an amendment to BCW 4 regarding the recruitment of Assistant Commissioners.

6. GUIDE TO THE REVIEW

- 6.1. The Commission considered that the Guide should contain reference to the Welsh Parliament constituencies making it clear that these were not included in the Commission's review of Parliamentary constituencies. It was **agreed** that the Secretary would draft a new paragraph in the Guide to explain this. It was also considered that a link to the Welsh Parliament website information regarding their constituencies could be put on the BCW website.
- 6.2. **Action:** Secretary to review and update the Review Guide.

- 6.3. The Commission considered that a flowchart showing the procedure and stages of the review would be a helpful addition to the appendices to the Guide and could also be put on the BCW website. It was **agreed** that the Communications and Engagement Manager would draw up a review flowchart for the Guide.
- 6.4. The Deputy Chair enquired whether it would be possible to notify stakeholders of the stages of the review as they happened rather than relying on them having to check the website. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would investigate the possibility of including a system on the BCW website whereby stakeholders could sign up for alerts when each stage of the review commenced.
- 6.5. **Action:** Communications and Engagement Manager to look into the possibility of updating the BCW website to allow for notifications.

7. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- 7.1. It was noted that the Welsh Language Impact Assessment referred to question 7 but there was no question 7 on the form. The Secretary explained that she was still in the process of drafting the assessment. It was **agreed** that the Secretary would review and finalise the assessment.
- 7.2. The Commission considered that the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment would require more thought regarding how much weight need to be given to equality and diversity issues when formulating proposals. It was **agreed** that the other Boundary Commissions would be consulted regarding their position on taking account of equality and diversity issues when formulating their proposals.
- 7.3. **Action:** Secretary to ask other boundary commissions how much weight they give to equality and diversity issues when formulating their proposals.
- 7.4. The Commission considered that accessibility impact would also need to be evaluated given the change to public hearing procedures. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would include accessibility as part of their impact assessment process.

8. INITIAL BRIEFINGS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- 8.1. The Commission considered that, given the likelihood of the initial briefings being held online, it would be desirable to be notified of the questions in advance. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would include a request for questions in advance within the invites sent to the political parties, other key stakeholders and MPs.
- 8.2. **Action:** Communications and Engagement Manager to request initial briefing questions in advance from stakeholders.

- 8.3. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would contact the other boundary commissions to find out what questions had been asked at their initial briefings.
- 8.4. **Action:** Secretary to contact other boundary commissions regarding questions asked at their initial briefings.
- 8.5. It was **agreed** that the initial briefing with political parties and other key stakeholders would be held first with the initial briefing with MPs being held a week later. It was **agreed** that the initial briefings would be attended by the Deputy Chair, Members and members of the Secretariat.
- 8.6. It was **agreed** that the Communications and Engagement Manager would produce the slides for the initial briefings. It was **agreed** that reference to the BCW's review having no impact on Welsh Parliament constituency boundaries would be included in the slides.
- 8.7. **Action:** Communications and Engagement Manager to produce slides for initial briefings.
- 8.8. It was **agreed** that the Secretariat would let the Deputy Chair know of proposed dates for the initial briefings.
- 8.9. **Action:** Secretary to let the Deputy Chair know of proposed dates for the initial briefings as soon as possible.

9. 2018 LESSONS LEARNT REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS UPDATE

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the report dated January 2021 by the Secretary and the progress on implementation of the lessons learnt recommendation was **noted**.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1. The Secretary said that it would be unwise to specify in the Review Guide that public hearings would only last one day without knowing the level of interest. There would also need to be an assessment of the additional costs involved should a hearing need to continue into an extra day. It was **agreed** that the Secretary would need to make a decision on this issue based on the responses to the initial proposals and inform the Commission accordingly.
- 10.2. **Action:** Secretary to let Members know the likelihood of additional days being required for public hearings based on initial proposals representations received.
- 10.3. The Secretary enquired what the Commission's policy would be on receiving representations regarding the initial proposals during the revised

proposals consultation period. It was noted that the official position for previous reviews was that the Commission would only consider representations relating to the revised proposals. It was **agreed** that the Commission would not take a stance on this issue publicly.

- 10.4. Sam Hartley enquired whether the Commission's publication scheme made it clear what was and wasn't published. It was **agreed** that the publication scheme would be tabled at the next meeting.
- 10.5. **Action:** Secretary to add publication scheme to February meeting agenda.
- 10.6. The Head of Policy and Programmes said that initial schemes would be ready for consideration by early March and could take several days to consider. It was **agreed** that several evening meetings would be held to consider the initial proposals and that these would be staggered.
- 10.7. **Action:** Head of Policy and Programme to send suggested dates for future meetings to Members.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 23rd February 2021.