

Confirmed on 20 January 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 9 December 2004 in London

Present: Sam Younger (SY) (Chair)
Pamela Gordon (PG)
Glyn Mathias (GM)
Sir Neil McIntosh (NM)
Karamjit Singh (KS)

In attendance: Peter Wardle (PW)
Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Archie Gall (AG)
Roger Gough (RG)
Angela Salt (AS)
Nicole Smith (NS)
Rael Zackon (RZ)
Kate Sullivan (KBS)
Ellie Greenwood (EG)
Sam Hartley (SH)
Dave Mahon (DM)
Ros Baston (RB)
Linda Everet (LE)
Peter Quirk (PQ)

Implementation Team: Ann Devine (AD) (for items 4 – 11 inclusive)
Tim Atkinson (TA) (for items 4 – 11 inclusive)
Bill Pickles (BP) (for items 4 – 11 inclusive)
Phil Allen (PA) for items 4 – 11 inclusive)

PG, AG, SH and DM left the meeting whilst decisions were taken on items 5 – 10 inclusive.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 14 October 2004

1.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2004 were agreed, subject to typographical amendments and to the following:

Paragraph 8.2: delete 'registration' in first line and insert 'running elections'.

Paragraph 11.2: first line should read ' PG stated that the Commission might wish to firm up on some issues....'

Paragraph 11.3: the first line should read ' NM stated that there could equally be advantages if.....'

Paragraph 11.4: minor amendments to the last sentence, and then add: ' The Commission would then make recommendations to the Secretary of State'.

Paragraph 14.2: should include a clear reference to Euro Day.

Paragraph 15.2 and 15.5: amend to correct the inaccuracy relating to the decision on the application to register the Conservative Democratic Alliance, which was to approve the application.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2004

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2004 were agreed.

3. Minutes of meeting of 25 November 2004

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2004 were agreed, subject to some textual changes.
- 3.2 SY stated that the Government would be responding to Voting for Change and Delivering Democracy? today.
- 3.3 AS reported that the original estimated budget of £1,555,000 which was submitted to Commissioners with the report on the Spring Campaign 2004 included a TV campaign in England, as well as rolling registration activity aimed at home-movers, outreach work, PR, setting up of a call centre and research evaluation.

The original estimated cost of £1m for the TV campaign was £1m. The Commissioners requested that this be extended to cover Scotland and Wales, as well as England. Due to this decision, and the higher costs of buying TV time for February 2005, the cost will be now £1.3m.

The total cost of the registration activity will now be £1,765,863. This is within the available budget for campaigns for 2004/5.

- 3.4 SY outlined the ways in which the Commission intended to provide information for overseas voters, and noted that the budget for this would not equate to that spent in the UK.
- 3.5 SY noted that there had been a debate in the House the previous day concerning service voters.

4. Electoral change amendment order: district of Chiltern

- 4.1 The Implementation Team presented the report, which outlined the changes required to ensure that the district ward boundaries were coterminous with the parish boundaries. No electors were affected by the minor amendments being proposed.
- 4.2 **The Commissioners approved the electoral change amendment Order for the district of Chiltern, and authorised the affixation of the Commission's seal to the Order.**

5. Periodic electoral review: county of Buckinghamshire

- 5.1 GM presented the report, and drew attention to the following issues:
- Wycombe – alternative proposals for west of district
 - Wycombe – Chiltern Valley and Marlow divisions
 - South Bucks – division of Farnham Royal parish
 - Parish council electoral arrangements – Great Marlow parish
 - High electoral variances
 - Names of proposed electoral divisions
 - Amendments to boundaries of Chess Valley and The Chalfonts and Seer Green divisions
- 5.2 The District Council had provided new evidence of community identity in relation to the alternative proposals for the west of Wycombe district. The arguments were finely balanced; however, the Implementation Team considered that the Boundary Committee's final recommendations represented the best balance between the statutory criteria.
- 5.3 TA drew attention to the proposal for a modification to the Chess Valley and The Chalfonts & Seer Green divisions, so that the boundaries would be coterminous with the revised district ward boundaries (Minute 4 above).
- 5.4 **The Commissioners agree to accept the recommendations of the Boundary Committee, subject to the modifications set out in Paragraphs 53,65,71 and 77 of the Implementation Team's report, and with the clarifications in Appendix B.**

6. Periodic electoral review: county of Cambridgeshire

- 6.1 NM presented the report, which proposed a council of 69 members, an increase of ten over the current number. NM outlined the issues set out in the report:
- Multi-member divisions

- East Cambridgeshire – Soham & Fordham Villages divisions
- Fenland – electoral projections
- Fenland – Chatteris and Forty Foot divisions
- Huntingdonshire – Norman Cross division
- Huntingdonshire – St Neots East and St Neots West divisions
- South Cambridgeshire – Histon & Cottenham division
- South Cambridgeshire – Sawston division
- South Cambridgeshire – Waterbeach division
- High electoral variances
- Names of proposed divisions

6.2 NM drew attention to the detailed representation received in respect of the proposed St Neots East and St Neots West divisions, which provided a well-argued case for reverting to the original draft recommendations, on grounds of community identity. PG stated that members of the Boundary Committee had been consulted informally, although the response was not unanimous.

6.3 **The Commissioners agreed to ask the Boundary Committee to agree a modification to the recommendation for St Neots East and St Neots West, which would entail a reversion to the draft recommendations of the Boundary Committee.**

7. Periodic electoral review: county of Cornwall

7.1 SY presented the report, and referred to the County Council's general comments concerning the Boundary Committee's approach to developing its recommendations, and the proposals for multi-member divisions. SY drew attention to the following issues:

- Restormel – St Mewan and Treverbyn divisions
- Penwith – Penzance division
- Carrick – Falmouth North & West divisions
- Caradon – Liskeard division
- Caradon – Burraton & Landulph division
- Carrick – Roseland division
- Carrick - Truro East division
- Penwith – Hayle-Gwinear-Gwithian division
- Restormel – St Enoder & Colan division
- Names of proposed divisions

7.2 At Stage Three, the County Council had proposed an alternative single-member pattern for Restormel St Mewan and Treverbyn divisions. SY considered that there was a good case for modification to four single-members divisions, based on a better reflection of community identity. However, there may be an issue regarding consultation, and the views of the Boundary Committee should be sought.

- 7.3 The Commissioners noted the proposals for Penzance division, and wished to be satisfied that the circumstances were sufficiently exceptional to justify a three-member division. They agreed to ask for further advice or information, and to ask the Boundary Committee to consider the alternative, single-member, proposal for this area.
- 7.4 The Commissioners noted that lack of consensus regarding the names of four of the proposed divisions of Falmouth North and West, Grampond, Treverbyn, and Probus. The Commissioners stated that they would agree the renaming of these four divisions. PG and AG indicated that the Boundary Committee would agree to this modification.
- 7.5 **The Commissioners agreed to:**
- **Ask the Boundary Committee to agree to a modification to the recommendations for St Austell and Treverbyn divisions (Restormel) in order to adopt the County Council's proposed pattern of four single-member divisions for that area, and to ask the Boundary Committee for its views on consultation on the alternative proposal**
 - **Ask the Boundary Committee for further advice or information in relation to the justification for a three-member division for Penzance, and to ask the Boundary Committee to consider the alternative proposal for this area**

8. Periodic electoral review: county of Leicestershire

- 8.1 SY presented the report. No major issues had arisen from the representations received, which concerned the following:
- Blaby – consultation with Braunstone parish
 - Blaby – Braunstone parish
 - Blaby – Cosby & Countesthorpe and Narborough & Whetstone divisions
 - Charnwood – Loughborough
 - Hinckley & Bosworth – Market Bosworth division and Barlestone parish
 - Hinkley & Bosworth – Mallory division and Newbold Verdon parish
 - Hinkley & Bosworth – Markfield, Desford & Thornton division and Desford parish
 - North West Leicestershire -Blackfordby parish ward of Ashby-de-la-Zouch parish
 - Names of proposed divisions

- 8.2 BP stated that he had received only an informal response from Council officers concerning the suggested changes to names of divisions.
- 8.3 The Commissioners agreed to refer the proposed modification in respect of the distribution of town councillors between the town wards of Braunstone Town Council to the Boundary Committee for agreement. This would also enable the Implementation Team to pursue the County Council for a formal response on division names.
- 8.4 KS declared an interest in this item, as, having previously been employed by Leicestershire County Council as Assistant County Clerk, he knew many of the people referred to in the report. KS did not take part in the discussion on this item.
- 8.5 **The Commissioners agreed to ask the Boundary Committee to agree to a modification to the final recommendations to redistribute town councillors between the town wards of Braunstone Town Council, which would entail a reversion to the draft recommendations.**

9. Periodic electoral review: county of West Sussex

- 9.1 KS presented the report, to which was attached an errata sheet. The County Council had made representations concerning the review process. In particular, the County Council considered that the Boundary Committee had given higher priority to achieving coterminosity with district wards than indicated in the Guidance. The County Council was also concerned that sufficient consideration had not been given by the Committee to the evidence which it had provided, including its argument against multi-member divisions. The staff of the Boundary Committee had responded to the County Council's specific requests for information, and at Stage Three, had met with group leaders. JD stated that she had received correspondence from the County Secretary concerning a request for a meeting to discuss the recommendations. The Commissioners considered that the process issues had been explored and answered.
- 9.2 The County Council had not provided evidence to support its assertions on a number of issues, including multi-member divisions. KS stated that the eight proposed multi-member divisions were all in urban areas, where the demography led to this conclusion.
- 9.3 KS also drew attention to the following specific issues:
- Adur – Lancing and Sompting divisions
 - Adur – Arundel Wick division
 - Chichester district – alternative proposals for south of the district
 - Crawley – Ilfield, Langley Green & West Green division
 - Crawley – Pound Hill, Worth & Maidenbower division

- Crawley – Bewbush, Gossops Green and Southgate division
- Mid Sussex – Burgess Hill division
- Mid Sussex – Haywards Heath division
- Mid Sussex – East Grinstead division
- Worthing – Castle, Gaisford and Salvington divisions
- High electoral variances
- Names of proposed wards/divisions

9.4 AG noted that in Crawley, there were neighbourhood areas named after the district wards. The town was designed around separate community identities, and the Boundary Committee had had regard to these, in reaching conclusions on its final recommendations.

9.5 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations of the Boundary Committee, subject to the modifications set out in paragraph 144 of the report concerning division names, and with the clarifications in Appendix B.**

10. Periodic electoral review: county of Worcestershire

10.1 SY presented the report. Three representations had been received, concerning:

- Malvern Hills - Tenbury and Hallow divisions
- Wychavon – Upton Snodsbury and Pershore divisions
- Wyre Forest – amendment to proposed St Mary’s and Chaddesley divisions

10.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations of the Boundary Committee, with the clarifications set out in Appendix B.**

11. Electoral change orders

11.1 The Implementation Team presented the reports which concerned the electoral change Orders for:

- County of Bedfordshire
- County of Dorset
- County of East Sussex
- County of Hampshire
- County of Oxfordshire
- County of Suffolk

11.2 **The Commissioners approved the electoral change Orders, and authorised the affixation of the Commission’s seal to the Orders.**

12. NIF quarterly report

- 12.1 GM presented the report, which set out the current position of the projects, and drew attention to projects 120 (Mock elections) and 121 (Parliamentary Ambassador Scheme) which were partnership projects. The Commissioners considered that the Speaker's Committee should be made aware of the success of the projects, especially those concerned with engaging with young people and with disabled people.
- 12.2 AS referred to the need for a more focussed approach. The partnership arrangements were very effective, as organisations other than the Commission could be better placed to deliver quality outcomes. The review of NIF would consider how best use can be made of the resource, whether it addresses a strategic purpose, and whether there are other models for delivery.
- 12.3 **The Commissioners noted the report, and thanked EG for her work on the NIF.**

13. NIF budget

- 13.1 GM presented the report, and referred to the proposals for additional funding for the years 2004/5 and 2005/6.
- 13.2 For 2004/5, an additional £50,000 was being sought from unallocated s.13 funds. It was accepted that public interest is at a high level during a General Election, and in that event, more applications were anticipated.
- 13.3 For 2005/6, an increase of £100,00 was being sought, to address the increased number of applications, and to give a fairer balance of projects throughout the UK. This proposal was without prejudice to the outcome of the review of NIF. NM referred to the financial and staffing implications. The Commissioners noted the proposal with sympathy at this stage, but agreed that a final decision would be taken when the time came to consider the overall allocation of Commission funds for 2005/6.
- 13.4 NS noted that the review would be completed by summer 2005, and it was assumed that no changes would be made to the fund arrangements in 2005. There would need to be transitional arrangements towards the end of the financial year.
- 13.5 **The Commissioners agreed the additional sum of £50,000 for the financial year 2004/5 to be funded from unallocated s.13 monies, and noted that an increase of £100,000 would be considered for the financial year 2005/6.**

14. Audit Committee: reappointment of members

- 14.1 JD presented the report, which recommended the reappointment of the Commissioner and independent members of the Audit Committee for twelve months from 21 December 2004.
- 14.2 PW stated that it may not be possible to report back on the terms of reference for the Audit Committee to the Commission meeting on 6 January 2005. Liz Sandwith and John Quin would be invited to attend Commission meeting on an appropriate date.
- 14.3 The Commissioners expressed their appreciation to NM, KS and John Quin for their work on the Audit Committee.
- 14.4 **The Commissioners agreed to reappoint NM and KS as Commissioner members of the Audit Committee, and John Quin as the independent member of the Audit Committee, for a period of twelve months from 21 December 2004.**

15. Application to register a party name: None of the Above

15.1 [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

15.4 **The Commissioners agreed to await the receipt of the expected letter from Ministers at the Department of Constitutional Affairs, and asked for an update at the meeting on 6 January 2005. A likely option at that stage would be for SY to write to the applicants, renewing the Commission’s invitation to them to withdraw the application in the public interest. The Commissioners also asked for a paper to be prepared for one of the Commission meetings in**

January setting out the options, including legislation, for addressing the Commission's concerns.

16. European Parliamentary elections 2004: training project evaluation and development plans

- 16.1 KBS and PQ briefed the Commissioners on the results of the evaluation of the training project for the European Parliamentary Elections in June 2004. The Commissioners noted that Electoral Administration staff were currently reviewing the role of the Commission in provision of event-based training, with this report and those following the 2003 devolved elections as key inputs.
- 16.2 The Commissioners noted that it was unlikely that such a large outsourced project would be pursued in the future and that the current intention was to move in-house the production and management of such projects.
- 16.3 **The Commissioners noted the issues raised in the evaluation.**

17. Review of the Statement of Accounts guidance notes

- 17.1 LE presented the report and outlined the consultation process, which had included professional bodies and the NAO. The proposals included more disclosures, especially in relation to directors' fees, and membership numbers to support financial information, and changes to the auditors statement. SY referred to the commitment made at the PPP meeting in November 2004, that the guidance should take effect for the 2005 accounts.
- 17.2 NM stated that it was essential to differentiate between that which must be complied with and that which is good practice, ie. between that which is mandatory and that which is advisory. PW said that it was important for the Commission to be clear on the reasons for introducing new requirements, and on the consequences if parties or their accounting units (or, indeed, their external auditors) did not comply with them.
- 17.3 The Commissioners were concerned about the status of the external auditors' statement in relation to compliance with the guidance. The NAO should be consulted on this issue.
- 17.4 **The Commissioners agreed that new draft guidance should be prepared for discussion with political parties by the end of January, and for consideration by the Commissioners in due course.**

18. Items for information

18.1 The Commissioners received the following items for information:

- Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 30 September 2004
- Minutes of the meeting of the PPP of 7 September 2004
- Quarterly survey of electoral petitions and allegations of electoral malpractice
- Schedule of meetings 2004/5

18.2 The meetings outside London would be held on the following dates in 2005 and 2006:

- 20 January 2005 in Caernarfon
- 10 February in Belfast
- 9 June in Scotland
- 8 September in Derry
- 9 February 2006 in Wales

18.3 The meeting scheduled for 21 March 2005 will commence at 3pm.

18.4 The following additional items of information were raised:

- SY had received a letter from John Spellar asking for research on registration; this was being considered.
- A response from the Minister had been received following the report on the Welsh Assembly elections
- KBS would be attending a meeting in Ottawa called to discuss elections in Iraq
- Thanks had been received from Professor Graham Zellick for the farewell dinner and gift

18.5 NS and AS circulated the following papers relating to the Government response on Voting for Change and Delivering Democracy?:

- A statement from Nick Raynsford
- A draft Commission statement
- The response on Delivering Democracy?

NS and AS outlined the statements, responses and draft press releases, and handling arrangements.

18.6 The Commissioners recorded their thanks to Professor Michael Clarke for his work on the Boundary Committee. They also thanked the Secretary of the Commission and her team for their work in supporting the Commission in the last year.

