

NOTES OF THE COMMISSIONERS PRIVATE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2002.

Present: Sam Younger (Chair)
Pamela Gordon
Glyn Mathias
Sir Neil McIntosh
Karamjit Singh
Professor Graham Zellick

In attendance: Roger Creedon
Jacqui Dixon

Doug Stewart (for items 1 & 2 below)
Stephen Judson (for item 3 below)

1. COMBINED ELECTION AND REFERENDUM POLLS

- 1.1 Doug Stewart presented the report on Combined Election and Referendum polls. The Commissioners welcomed the report as a useful summary of the issues. The Commissioners agreed with the conclusion in the report that combined polls could affect the operation of both polls. The Commissioners were of the view that referendums, except on minor local issues, should not take place at the same time as other elections.
- 1.2 The Commission had already received enquiries about its views on combining the Euro referendum with the devolved and local elections next May. Although the Euro was not the only topic for a potential referendum, it was clear that interested groups were seeking a view from the Commission. The Commissioners agreed that they should make a public statement of their views by an appropriate means.
- 1.3 There was discussion on the level of consultation which should take place. Some Commissioners felt that the Commission should not issue a statement of principle without some form of wider consultation. However the statement could be specific about arrangements for national referendums which were only likely to be held on fundamental issues, whilst allowing for further consultation on the broader issues on combined polls.
- 1.4 **The Commissioners agreed the report, subject to minor amendments, and requested that a draft statement of their views should be produced for further consideration.**

2. REFERENDUMS PLANNING TEAM - PREPARATION

- 2.1 Doug Stewart presented the report which outlined proposals for planning for regional and national referendums. The approach was agreed subject to some amendments in relation to project management.
- 2.2 The Commissioners should comprise the Programme Board and there should be a small group to act as the Nationwide Project Board; the latter will meet on 1 July 2002. There will be a regular report to the Commissioners in the form of a monthly newsletter.
- 2.3 **The Commissioners accepted the report, subject the amendments set out above.**

3. Party Political Broadcasting Review Consultation Paper

- 3.1 Stephen Judson presented the paper, which was accepted with some proposed amendments. The Commissioners agreed with the overall approach. GM referred to the potential reaction from broadcasters.
- 3.2 The Commissioners discussed arrangements for consulting with a wider selection of the public. It was agreed to ask broadcasters for information on their public forums and focus groups, which could be added to the list of organisations to be consulted.
- 3.3 **The Commissioners accepted the paper, subject to amendments. It was agreed that GZ and SJ should agree the amendments and the dates for the consultation process.**

4. Review of Local Government Election Cycles

- 4.1 RC presented the paper and the letter from the DTLR dated 12 April 2002. Particular attention was drawn to the issues of resourcing and timing, the potential effects on the work on other reviews and the implications for the proposed regional assemblies.
- 4.2 The Commissioners agreed that this work could not be done by one individual; a project team was needed. There would need to be extensive consultation with local authorities, local government associations and political parties, as well as with the public. The Commissioners did not wish to delay other projects in order to carry out this work.
- 4.3 The Commissioners were also of the view that the task could not be completed within the nine month period proposed by the DTLR. It was recognised that if requested by the Secretary of State the Commission

would have to comply but discussions should be held with the Department over the start date and length of the review.

- 4.3 **It was agreed that SY, PG and RC would have open discussions on this matter with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister at an appropriate time.**

5. Other items

- 5.1 GM reported that there had been a series of useful meetings in Wales last week with the political parties and with the Presiding Officer. A draft protocol for conduct during the Assembly elections was being drawn up for comment by the Commission.
- 5.2 PG advised the Commissioners that the Deputy Commissioners wished to discuss the working arrangements between the Boundary Committee and the Implementation Team at the Commissioners dinner on 12 June. PG also reported that delegation arrangements had now been agreed so that the Director of the Boundary Committee could agree minor modifications.
- 5.3 RC advised that a first draft of the Annual Report for 2001/2 would be circulated for consultation. Comments should go back directly to RC.
- 5.4 RC outlined what were understood to be the respective responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellors Department for local government and electoral matters.