

Confirmed on 2 September 2002

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION HELD
ON 11 JULY 2002.**

Present: Sam Younger (Chair) (SY)
Pamela Gordon (PG) (for items 1- 4, and 13 onwards)
Glyn Mathias (GM)
Sir Neil McIntosh (NM)
Karamjit Singh (KS)
Professor Graham Zellick (GZ)

In attendance: Roger Creedon (RC) (for items 17, 20.3 & 20.4)
Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Roger Gough (RG)
Anne Hinds (AH) (for item 13 onwards)
Nicole Smith (NS) (for item 13 onwards)
Chris Welford (CW) (for item 13 onwards)
Rael Zackon (RZ)
Martine Padwell (MP) (for items 1 – 12)

Boundary Committee: Pamela Gordon (PG) (for items 5 –12)
Archie Gall (AG) (for items 1 – 12)
Elspeth Rainbow (ER) (for items 1 – 12)

Implementation Team: Derek Little (DL) (for items 1 – 12)
Ann Devine (AD) (for items 1 – 12)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2002.

1.1 The minutes of the Commissioners private meeting held on 5 June 2002 were agreed. The Commissioners were advised that the Party Political Broadcasting Review Consultation paper had been published. It was requested that copies be sent to the Commissioners.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2002.

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 12 June 2002 were agreed, subject to the wording of paragraph 3.2 being amended to read:

PG suggested that the Electoral Commission may not wish to accept requests for modifications based on a lower level of evidence than the Boundary Committee would have used.

- 2.2 JD advised the Commissioners that the modifications proposed in respect of West Berkshire had been agreed by the Boundary Committee.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2002.

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Commission held on 13 June 2002 were agreed subject to the following amendments:

In paragraph 8.4, add 'with delivery points' to the end of the first sentence.

In paragraph 8.6, add 'local authorities and' to the third line before 'Parish Councils'.

- 3.2 The Commissioners were advised that RC was updating the PID on funding of political parties, referred to in paragraph 11.4.

4. Minutes of the Commissioners private meeting held on 1 July 2002.

- 4.1 The minutes of the Commissioners private meeting held on 1 July 2002 were agreed, subject to the words 'but has no involvement in e-voting issues' being added at the end of paragraph 1.2.

5. Borough of Christchurch – modification.

- 5.1 AD presented an additional report explaining a proposed modification to the Boundary Committee's recommendations for electoral changes for the Borough of Christchurch. The Boundary Committee had agreed that their final recommendations should be amended in the light of further evidence which arose during the Implementation Team's consultation on the draft Order and Order maps.

- 5.2 **The Commissioners agreed to the proposed modification.**

6. City of Cambridge.

- 6.1 SY presented the report. The proposals were based on the submission by the City Council. No representations in respect of the final report had been received.

- 6.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

7. District of East Cambridgeshire.

- 7.1 SY presented the report and referred to the representations received, particularly in respect of Council size. The final recommendations of the Boundary Committee were based on the forecasts provided to it. In respect of Bottisham Ward, the Boundary Committee had accepted the argument on community identity but the current warding arrangements are not viable in terms of electoral equality.
- 7.2 The Commissioners had a short discussion concerning evidence which was required to support representations. The standard letter sent to local authorities may need to be reviewed to ensure that local authorities consult their residents, and that those making representations are aware that evidence needs to be submitted to support any representations.
- 7.3 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

8. District of South Cambridgeshire.

- 8.1 SY presented the report. No representations had been received.
- 8.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

9. District of Huntingdonshire.

- 9.1 SY presented the report and referred to the press release issued by the Boundary Committee on 23 April 2002, and the letter dated 3 June 2002 from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Derek Holley. A letter from Jonathon Djanogly, MP, supporting the submission from the Council's Executive Director of Central Services, was noted. AG was requested to reply to the letter from the Leader of the Council, and to send a copy to the Commissioners with a copy of the original letter.
- 9.2 The Commissioners had a short discussion on the issue of electoral forecasts and the effect of planned development. In making recommendations, the Boundary Committee could only work with known development plans, otherwise reviews might be deferred indefinitely. At the end of the current review programme, there will be a need for some further reviews to take account of such matters.
- 9.3 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

10. District of Fenland.

- 10.1 SY presented the report. No representations had been received.

10.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

11. Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (UA).

11.1 NM presented the report. The Commissioners had a short discussion on the subject of ward names. It was generally agreed that ward names should be decided at local level, and that the standard letter to local authorities should reflect this view.

11.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

12. Borough of Bracknell Forest.

12.1 GZ presented the report and referred to the concerns expressed by the Parish Councils that they did not receive direct copies of the final recommendations. AG advised that the arrangement requested by, and agreed with, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) was that reports would be sent to Parish Councils via that organisation.

12.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

13. Directors reports.

13.1 The Directors reports were noted subject to the following points:

13.2 Media and Public Affairs:

On 7 November, the Commission and SOLACE are to sponsor a LGA/AEA conference on elections.

There was a favourable response to the design of the consultation paper on the Party Political Broadcasting Review. However GM drew attention to the new promotional leaflets and whether the wording was unacceptably long. AH explained that changes had been requested to achieve a Crystal Mark. The Commissioners felt that it was more important to ensure that the language used was acceptable English.

KS asked for information about the development of the Commission Website. AH advised that a series of meetings had been held with interested people, and that SY had been involved in the process on behalf of the Commissioners.

13.3 Strategic Planning and Resources:

NM referred to the IT Strategy and the need for the Strategy Group to meet as soon as possible.

13.4 **Policy:**

The Director's report included the Programme Highlight report and the Research Update report.

On 31 July 2002, the Commission would be hosting a meeting of 22 members of the LGA. It was intended to hold these meetings on a quarterly basis.

The Corporate Plan requires the Commission to produce an outreach strategy, aimed at schools and young people, by October 2002. The event in Wales on 9 July was very successful.

The Commission has been asked to review the voting age. No lead Commissioner has been identified; GM may be available.

Reference was made to capacity and workload; this would be a discussion item for the Business Planning meeting in October.

NS referred to the consultation document on ID cards, and its relevance to voting. The Commission needs a position paper, to enable it to respond.

The Commissioners requested a copy of the specification on e-voting.

13.5 **Boundary Committee:**

The Boundary Committee and the ODPM were meeting on 12 July to discuss the guidance on the reviews which would arise from the Regional Government White Paper. The Boundary Committee strategy meeting will be held on 30 July 2002.

14. Devolved offices.

14.1 The Devolved Offices report was accepted. AH referred to the need for feedback on media contact in Northern Ireland; RC would be asked to follow up on this with Seamus Magee.

14.2 The Wales office was successfully launched on 9 July.

14.3 NM reported on a successful meeting with the Scottish Labour Party; it had been useful for RC to gauge the sensitivity around the Scottish Executive/Secretary of State issue. The first meeting of the Scottish PPP would be held on 12 July.

14.4 The first meeting of the PPP for Northern Ireland was held on 2 July, followed by a seminar at Stormont on the Electoral Fraud Act.

15. Autumn Voter Awareness Campaigns Briefing.

- 15.1 AH presented the report. The total expenditure on the campaign represents one-third of the budget available. As well as the advertising campaign outlined in the report, it was planned to publish a leaflet as part of the 'opt-out' campaign, which could be distributed with the annual registration forms. It would not be compulsory to use this leaflet; some local authorities were planning to issue their own leaflets.
- 15.2 KS expressed concern about the effectiveness of the campaign in relation to ethnic minority communities, and whether it would be more effective to use local radio and media in areas with the largest ethnic minority communities. AH stated that she had chosen print media as the most cost-effective option.
- 15.3 AH referred to the help-line for the campaign in Northern Ireland, which would dramatically increase costs. It was not possible to assess the use which would be made of the help-line; AH was working on the basis that there would not be a large number of calls.
- 15.4 GM referred to the importance of the relationship between the campaign and the voter research, especially in Wales. AH stated that there would be scoping studies for Wales and Scotland; she had tried to build in as much research as possible. GM also stated that it was essential to have clear objectives for the campaign, particularly on the targeting of difficult-to-reach groups, and proposed that this matter be discussed at the October Business Planning meeting, with the aim of agreeing how the Commission should approach the Speakers Committee for 2003/4.
- 15.5 **The Commissioners agreed the proposals set out in the report, subject to the cost amendments referred to above.**

16. PID – Accessibility review.

- 16.1 NS presented the report and referred to the timetable which envisaged that the review would be finished in May 2003. The Commissioners agreed that if the review ran through the election period in 2003, any conclusions would have the benefit of practical experience.
- 16.2 NS proposed restructuring the review; the review of legal issues would be concluded by March 2003, but the practical issues would be reviewed through the May 2003 election period.
- 16.3 KS stated that the issues relating to ethnic minority communities may be confined to particular authorities but that the issues for disabled and elderly voters would affect the wider community. GM referred to the

Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which was having the effect of reducing the number of polling stations available.

16.4 It was proposed that Joan Jones, Deputy Commissioner, should be invited to be a member of the Project Board.

16.5 **The Commissioners accepted the PID for the Accessibility Review, subject to the amendments outlined above.**

17. Combined election and referendum polls.

17.1 The Commissioners discussed the draft statement and requested that amendments be made to reflect the minutes of the Commissioners private meeting held on 1 July 2002.

17.2 The statement would be issued on the morning of 12 July and RC would formally advise the ODPM before the statement was released.

17.3 **The Commissioners agreed the statement subject to the changes requested, and authorised SY to approve the final version, prior to issue on 12 July.**

18. Referendums preparation.

18.1 JD reported that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

19. Pilot evaluation reports.

19.1 NS presented the report on the Gateshead pilot.

19.2 **The Commissioners accepted the report subject to the amendments proposed. In the absence of SY, NM was authorised to approve the final report.**

20. Information items.

20.1 The Commissioners formally noted the resignation of Kru Desai, Deputy Commissioner. PG advised that it had been decided not to recruit to the vacancy immediately.

The Commissioners wished to record their thanks to Kru Desai for her contribution to the work of the LGCE.

20.2 The Commissioners noted the reports on the review of electoral forms and the workshop on voter registration and electoral systems held on Mauritius.

- 20.3 RC reported that the Conservative motion to annul the order allocating finance for the voter awareness campaign had been defeated by 8 votes to 4.
- 20.4 RC reported on the LASER project. IdeA had updated the business case, and the ODPM and the Office of the E-envoy had reviewed this with RC. The ODPM seem to be reassured by the action now being taken, but no decision will be taken until September.

21. Commissioners matters.

- 21.1 KS reported that he had attended a seminar at Cambridge University on electoral democracy and would be submitting a report in due course.
- 21.2 SY reported that he had met with the Speaker to discuss current issues, before the Annual Report is published. SY would sign off the Annual Report in the week beginning 22 July 2002.
- 21.3 SY and RC had appeared before the Transport and Local Government Select Committee on 10 July 2002.
- 21.4 Three members of the Speakers Committee had attended a lunch arranged by SY on 10 July 2002.
- 21.5 NM referred to the reports which would be required on the 2003 elections, and the need to have people available to carry out the evaluations.