

Confirmed on 2 September 2002

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION HELD
ON 7 AUGUST 2002**

Present: Sam Younger (Chair) (SY)
Sir Neil McIntosh (NM)
Karamjit Singh (KS)

Apologies: Pamela Gordon
Glyn Mathias
Professor Graham Zellick

In attendance: Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Rael Zackon (RZ) for items 1 – 19 inclusive
Martine Padwell (MP) for items 1 – 19 inclusive
Stephen Judson (SJ) for items 20 –22 inclusive

Boundary Committee: Archie Gall (AG) for items 1 – 19 inclusive
Steve Evison (SE) for items 1 – 19 inclusive
Anna Fuchs (AF) for items 1 – 19 inclusive

Implementation Team: Derek Little (DL) for items 1 – 19 inclusive
Ann Devine (AD) for items 11 – 19 inclusive
Alice Cuninghame (AC) for items 1 – 10 inclusive

* The meeting was quorate for items 2 – 19 only.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2002

1.1 The minutes of the Commissioners meeting held on 11 July 2002 were deferred for confirmation to the meeting to be held on 11 September 2002. The Commissioners were advised that the Boundary Committee had agreed to the proposed modification in respect of the Borough of Christchurch.

2. District of Caradon.

2.1 NM presented the report. The proposals were based on the submission by the District Council with some minor boundary changes.

2.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

3. District of North Cornwall.

3.1 NM presented the report. The proposals were based on the submission by the District Council. One representation had been received from a Parish Council which raised no new issues.

3.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

4. Borough of Restormel.

4.1 NM presented the report. One area of concern raised by those who had made representations related to the high number of second homes and the effect this may have on the services provided by the local authority and the workload of local councillors. The Commissioners noted that this argument may be raised again by local authorities in similar circumstances. However the Commission is required to consider electoral equality, and therefore the relevant consideration was the numbers of electors, rather than the number of properties.

4.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

5. District of Carrick.

5.1 NM presented the report. There were two areas of concern which had been considered previously; no new issues had been raised.

5.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

6. District of Kerrier.

6.1 NM presented the report. One representation had been received on an aesthetic issue for which there was no justification provided.

6.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

7. District of Penwith.

7.1 NM presented the report and referred to the proposal for a two-member ward for Goldsithy, St Erth and St Hilary ward. Representations made by the District Council and two Parish Councils had included evidence in support of creating two one-member wards. This evidence had not been available to the Boundary Committee during Stage 3 of their review. AG advised the Commissioners that had this evidence been available at that stage, the Boundary Committee would probably have supported two one-member wards. Now that evidence had been produced, AG agreed on behalf of the Boundary

Committee that the modification to two one-member wards should be accepted.

7.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendation, with the modification which was agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.

8. Borough of Blackburn with Darwen.

8.1 SY presented the report. No representations had been received.

8.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

9. Borough of Reading.

9.1 SY presented the report. With reference to the single member ward, it was preferable not to have a ward straddling the river even if it was inconsistent to have one one-member ward.

9.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

10. District of Wokingham.

10.1 KS presented the report. KS referred to the modifications proposed in paragraphs 11 – 13 and 16 of the Implementation Team report, which had been agreed by AG on behalf of the Boundary Committee. The representations received in respect of Remenham, Wargrave & Ruscombe, Hurst and Twyford wards, was referred to in paragraphs 8 – 10 of the report and covered these areas of concern – process, electoral projections and community identity.

10.2 This had been a difficult review, and there was concern that an internal e-mail had been seen by objectors. However KS was satisfied that all evidence received had been considered. On balance, the proposal was the least unsatisfactory outcome. Most wards were being recommended for change and it was not possible to look at two wards in isolation; if changes were made in these areas, there would need to be a completely new review.

10.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations, with the modifications which had been agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.

11. Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth.

11.1 SY presented the report. No representations had been received. The proposal received from the local authority at Stage 3 had general support and the Boundary Committee had amended its proposals accordingly.

11.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

12. District of North West Leicestershire.

12.1 SY presented the report. One representation had been received in relation to the ward of Ravenstone, which had been fully considered by the Boundary Committee.

12.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

13. Borough of Oadby and Wigston.

13.1 SY presented the report. The suggestions for name changes would be referred to the Borough Council for consideration.

13.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

14. Borough of Melton.

14.1 SY presented the report. Two representations had been received. One consisted of two letters arguing against multi-member wards. The Commission would have to consider this in principle at a later date and form a view on whether to recommend single or multi-member wards or some combination of them. The other representation asked for some flats to be removed from a ward but the Commission cannot consider one part of a ward in isolation.

14.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

15. District of Blaby.

15.1 SY presented the report. Representations had been received on six issues, most of which had already been considered. AG advised that, on behalf of the Boundary Committee, he had agreed a modification to Blaby South ward to include Horton Court, the only access to which was in Blaby South. The suggestions for name changes would be referred to the District Council for consideration.

15.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations, with the modification which had been agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.

16. Borough of Charnwood.

16.1 SY presented the report. There had been substantial changes made at Stage 3 with much consultation on the warding arrangements.

16.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

17. District of Harborough.

17.1 SY presented the report. Representations had been received in respect of Tilton ward. The Implementation Team had asked the Boundary Committee to consider the effect of leaving Skeffington in Billesdon ward; as there were insufficient mitigating factors, this would have resulted in an unacceptable electoral variance. The suggestions for name changes would be referred to the District Council for consideration.

17.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

18. City of Leicester.

18.1 SY presented the report. KS declared an interest in that he had previously worked for Leicestershire County Council and many of those who had made representations were known to him; he did not take part in the discussion.

18.2 The Commissioners discussed the issue related to two areas of the City where the proposed warding based on community identity left significant levels of electoral inequality. The Commissioners did not feel able to come to a conclusion on the report, and asked that the Boundary Committee provide further advice.

18.2 The Commissioners agreed to defer consideration to a future meeting.

19. Borough of Slough.

19.1 KS presented the report. One objection had been received to a ward name but the name was acceptable to the Borough Council. The retirement of councillors was a matter for the local authority.

9.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

20. Evaluation of pilot schemes.

20.1 SJ presented the update report and the evaluation reports in respect of Stirling and West Wiltshire. The report on Stirling had been previously delegated to SY and NM, and they both agreed with the submitted report. The Commissioners agreed that the West Wilts report justified the Commission's view that by-elections should not need to be treated as pilot schemes.

20.2 The Chair authorised the publication of the evaluation report on Stirling, and agreed that the West Wilts report should be sent to the local authority for comment.

21. Bids for all postal-mayoral elections.

21.1 SJ presented the reports on the two bids from Hackney LBC and Stoke-on-Trent UA for all-postal mayoral elections. Application had been made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by the two local authorities. The ODPM was obliged to consult the Commission on these applications. However as the elections were due to take place in October 2002, it was necessary to send a response as soon as possible. The Commissioners considered the draft response to the ODPM prepared by the Director of Policy.

21.2 SJ reported that following the publication of the Commission's report on the pilots, Hackney LBC had amended its bid. Stoke had been invited to amend their bid, but had declined to do so. SY felt that it was unfair to press too hard for alterations at this stage. NM thought that it would be useful to have one of the two elections where the declaration was not used.

21.3 The Chair gave authorisation for the response to be sent to the ODPM, subject to amendments to take account of the Commissioners comments.

22. Consultation paper – internet campaign.

22.1 KS presented the consultation paper for Commissioners comments and approval. Comments had been received from Pamela Gordon, Glyn Mathias and Professor Graham Zellick, copies of which were circulated.

22.2 SJ advised the Commissioners that overlap between the scope of this review and the political advertising review would be confined to advertising content. The recommendations from the two reviews would be kept separate. The Commissioners discussed concerns about regulation and the need for good practice guidelines. The same principles which apply to other media would apply here.

22.3 The Commissioners asked for some amendments to the wording of the paper, to avoid any perception that the Commission had already taken a stance on some issues. It was intended to publish the consultation paper in September, with representations to be received by the end of October.

22.4 In the light of the discussion and the comments received from the other three Commissioners, SY authorised the issue of the consultation paper, subject to the amendments discussed .

23. Information items.

23.1 The Commissioners received information items on:

Research work on electoral fraud.

Minimum age review.

23.2 KS advised that he had attended a presentation in Northern Ireland on focus groups.

23.3 SY referred to the proposal of the Secretary of State to defer the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament by four days. There was no reason to oppose. **It was agreed that Andy O'Neill would draft a response for NM to approve.**