

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION HELD
ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2002**

Present: Sam Younger (Chair) (SY)
Pamela Gordon (PG) for items 1,2 and 13 onwards
Glyn Mathias (GM)
Professor Graham Zellick (GZ)

Apologies: Karamjit Singh
Sir Neil McIntosh

In attendance: Roger Creedon (RC)
Jacqui Dixon (JD)
Anne Hinds (AH) for items 2,3, and 13 – 16 inclusive
Nicole Smith (NS) for item 1- 3 and 13 – 16 inclusive
Rael Zackon (RZ)
Martine Padwell (MP) for items 3 –12 inclusive

Boundary Committee: Pamela Gordon (PG) for items 3 – 12 inclusive
Archie Gall (AG) for items 3 – 12 inclusive

Implementation Team: Derek Little (DL) for items 3 – 12 inclusive
Ann Devine (AD) for items 3 – 12 inclusive
Alice Cuninghame (AC) for items 3 – 12 inclusive

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2002.

1.1 The minutes of the Commissioners meeting held on 11 July 2002 were agreed.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2002.

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2002 were agreed, subject to comments from Karamjit Singh and Sir Neil McIntosh.

2.2 RC stated that he had signed off the West Wilts evaluation report; SY will look at this again before publication. NS reported that at the request of the Minister, Hackney LBC and Stoke-on-Trent UA had increased the number of delivery points as part of their bid for an all-postal pilot.

3. Training Strategy.

3.1 The Commissioners received a presentation from Jim Stevens of the AEA and Selwyn Runnett from SOLACE Enterprises, outlining a proposed UK training strategy for electoral administrators. The strategy had been commissioned by the Commission, the AEA and SOLACE.

3.2 The Commissioners endorsed the main thrust of the strategy. A number of points were raised:

- The need for local authorities to commit to the strategy
- The need to integrate training for Returning Officers, party agents, candidates and other audiences
- More emphasis on distance learning/electronic learning packages
- Whether some form of licensing might, in due course, be required to persuade local authorities to engage in training

PG proposed using contacts with the LGA to raise the profile of the strategy, and to obtain commitment from lead councillors and cabinet members with responsibility for democratic services. The Commissioners were concerned that training of electoral administration staff was not a priority for most councils, whose budgets for training were limited. There was agreement that there should be a clear emphasis on distance learning and the use of facilities such as CD Rom packages, in order to widen access to training, although it was recognised that these were not necessarily more cost effective than more traditional training activities.

3.3 The Commissioners approved the draft strategy subject to the comments set out above. It was agreed that the next stage was for the Commission to determine its policy on the priority to be given to seeking funding for the strategy.

4. District of Arun

4.1 GM presented the report. One representation in respect of the final report had been received from the local authority which agreed with the proposals.

4.2 The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.

5. District of Chichester

5.1 GM presented the report. There were two areas of particular concern to those who made representations. Representations received from Linch

Parish Meeting, the District Council and the County Council supported the proposal for the parish of Linch to be included in Rogate district ward. The second representation concerned the naming of Bosham ward; the District Council's view on this matter was accepted.

- 5.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations, with the modification which was agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.**

6. Borough of Worthing

- 6.1 GM presented the report. Two areas of concern were covered by those making representations; however these raised no new issues.
- 6.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

7. District of Adur

- 7.1 GM presented the report. No representations in respect of the final report had been received.
- 7.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

8. District of Horsham

- 8.1 GM presented the report. There were five areas of concern for those who made representations. The representations relating to Heath Common parish ward, the distribution of parish councillors in North Horsham, the boundary between Riverside and Forest wards, and the name of Riverside ward were acceptable to the Boundary Committee. However it was considered that the recommendation in respect of Small Dole parish ward was the only reasonable one which the Boundary Committee could make in the circumstances.
- 8.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations, with the modifications which were agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.**

9. Borough of Crawley

- 9.1 GM presented the report. No representations in respect of the final report had been received.
- 9.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

10. District of Mid Sussex

- 10.1 GM presented the report. There were three areas of concern for those who made representations. The Boundary Committee had agreed two minor alterations to boundaries; however representation in respect of the location of polling stations was not a matter which the Commission could take into account.
- 10.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations, with the modifications which were agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by the Director.**

11. Borough of Poole

- 11.1 SY presented the report. There were six areas of concern for those who made representations. The issues concerning Alderney and Newtown wards had already been considered by the Boundary Committee. The suggestion that Canford Heath East and West should be one four-member ward was not acceptable.
- 11.2 There was a detailed discussion in respect of Broadstone and Creekmoor wards, and in particular the proposed transfer of the Pine Springs area from the former to the latter. The implications of the original proposal, which was based on a submission by the local authority, had not been realised by residents and consequently the strength of feeling against this proposal was not reflected in the consultation process. Maintaining the existing ward boundaries would result in a projected electorate figure of –13% in Creekmoor ward in 2006, which would be within acceptable variance.
- 11.3 PG and AG indicated that if the Boundary Committee had received such strong representations during the consultation period, they probably would have agreed to revert to existing boundaries.
- 11.4 The suggested name change for Creekmoor borough ward should be referred to the local authority for consideration.
- 11.5 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations. They also agreed to ask for a modification under which the Pine Springs area would remain in Broadstone ward. This was agreed on behalf of the Boundary Committee by its Chair and Director.**

12. City of Peterborough

- 12.1 GZ presented the report. The only representation received came from the local authority which was content with the recommendations.
- 12.2 **The Commissioners agreed to accept the recommendations.**

13. Voter Awareness Campaign Strategy Spring 2003

- 13.1 AH presented the report. The strategy takes account of the differing registration and turnout levels between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and the impact of the Electoral Fraud (Northern Ireland) Act. The strategy therefore proposes a separate campaign in Northern Ireland, consistent with the Autumn 2002 campaign. The tendering arrangements for the agency would be completed by the end of September. AH was awaiting feedback from the regional offices on the proposed costings. She also reported that work was continuing on finding an acceptable form of words for material relating to Scottish local elections.
- 13.2 The Commissioners noted the change of approach to general targeting rather than targeting of ethnic minority communities and young people. The reason for the change in targeting was the low turnout figures across all groups for these particular elections. Information for the electorate on the roles of the devolved legislatures should be considered.
- 13.2 **The Commissioners agreed the draft campaign strategy for 2003 as set out in the report.**

14. PID: Political Advertising Review

- 14.1 GM and NS presented the report and the draft Project Initiation Document. This review differs from others in that it is unlikely to require legislation. The timetable therefore goes beyond Spring 2003. There is some overlap of content with the review on internet voting.
- 14.2 It was felt that the question of whether statutory regulation was desirable should be left open at this stage.
- 14.3 **The Commissioners approved the draft project initiation document attached to the report.**

15. Findings – Public Opinion and the 2002 local elections

- 15.1 NS presented the report. The findings arose from micro polls in 13 pilot areas as well as polls on attitudes to local government. The research covered England only. The findings would be announced in a two-side summary of research format
- 15.2 It was proposed that this document would be issued at the beginning of Local Government week in October; it was also intended to publish the CLEAR research results at the LGA Conference on 15 October.
- 15.3 Further comments were invited on the draft by 5 September.

15.4 **The Commissioners agreed the text of the document, subject to any further comments received by 5 September 2002.**

16. Pilot Scheme Evaluations: By-elections and mayoral elections 2002 – 2003

16.1 NS presented the report. The paper proposed a change in the policy and process for obtaining Commissioners' approval to draft and final evaluation reports. Under the proposed arrangements, the approval of the Commissioners would be required only once in the process, with the Chair of the Commission giving approval at other stages. Where appropriate, the report should also be referred to the Commissioners with responsibility for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

16.2 The Commissioners indicated that it would be preferable for them to see the reports before they were sent to the local authorities. Only if there were substantial later changes should the report should be referred again to the Commissioners.

16.3 NS reported that in respect of Aberdeenshire, the Scottish Executive had requested that the Commission should not submit the report until the Council's evaluation is complete. This might affect the timetable, but there was no statutory requirement to publish Scottish reports within three months.

16.4 **The Commissioners agreed to the proposed arrangements as set out in the report, subject to the comments set out above.**

17. European Elections: Gibraltar

17.1 RC presented his report and asked whether the Commission should express a view. The ODPM and FCO were taking different approaches, and the Commissioners were agreed that the Commission should not become involved. There was a need for clarity for the electorate, but concern that including the name in a constituency would give prominence to a small number of electors.

17.2 PG stated that her preference would be to include the name on grounds of clarity but agreed that the Commission should not take a position. GZ suggested that information could be contained in supporting information, to inform voters that Gibraltar was part of their constituency.

17.3 **It was agreed that the Commission would express no view at this stage.**

18. Commissioners points

- 18.1 PG reported that a two-day training session had been held for Boundary Committee staff, which had been very successful. Staff from other sections of the Commission had attended, and some had given presentations on their work.
- 18.2 It was confirmed that PG and GZ would attend the PPP meeting on 10 September.
- 18.3 SY outlined attendance at the party conferences of Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives. Commissioners were asked to inform NS if they were invited to any fringe events.