Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Note of Meeting held on 27th September 2022 at 3.30pm

Erskine House, Belfast & Microsoft Teams

**In Attendance**

Mr. Justice Michael Humphreys, Deputy Chair to the Boundary Commission (MH)

Sarah Havlin, Boundary Commissioner (SH)

Vilma Patterson, Boundary Commissioner (VP)

Siobhan Carey, Registrar General of Northern Ireland (SC)

Jim Lennon, Chief Survey Officer, LPS (JL)

Angela McGrath, Commissioner of Valuation, LPS (AMcG)

Heather McKinley, Secretary to the Boundary Commission (HMcK)

Andrea Richardson, Deputy Secretary to the Boundary Commission (AR)

Lisa Hay, Office Manager to the Boundary Commission (LH)

Lyn McBride, Support Officer to the Boundary Commission (LM)

**Apologies**

Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer (VMcV)

# Welcome and Apologies

Members were welcomed to the hybrid meeting. There were no declarations of interest.

# Note of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Members agreed the note of the BCNI meeting held on 23rd August 2022. A matter arising from the previous meeting’s AOB was noted, relating to new VAT advice from NIO Finance and its impact on the BCNI budget.

# Scenario Planning

Given SOSNI’s statutory duty to call an election if a Northern Ireland Executive is not formed by 28th October 2022, Commissioners had asked to receive a further update on scenario planning. Further to the last meeting, the Commission had announced its third consultation would begin w/c 14th November. The guidance for all public bodies (including ALBs) states that consultations should not generally be launched during a pre-election period (PEP), so it was agreed that if SOSNI called an election and the PEP had begun, then the consultation launch date should be rescheduled. Other scenarios were also discussed and given the uncertainty, it was agreed that the situation should continue to be monitored and a further update provided at the next meeting.

# BCNI Framework Document – Revised Version

It was noted that BCNI’s Framework document had been updated in line with new guidance from HMT. An overview of amendments was given, noting a number of new sections which provided additional detail around specific matters of governance. Following this overview there was a discussion, and the new document was agreed. Commissioners thanked the Secretariat for the work done on this.

# Revised Mapping Presentation and Discussion

Attendees were updated on mapping for the Revised Proposals. It was noted that the Deputy Chair and Commissioners had now agreed a preferred revised scheme following consideration of representations received during the initial and secondary consultation periods, and a number of site visits.

A map of the preferred revised scheme was presented and an overview of key changes from the Initial Proposals given. In particular, it was noted that ten constituencies were unchanged from the Initial Proposals, and that all 18 constituencies were within the Rule 2 electorate range. It was also noted that this revised map scheme involved the movement of 11 whole wards from their current constituency into a different constituency (compared to 20 in the Initial Proposals). 48 of the 56 wards currently split were aligned in this scheme (compared to 54 aligned in the Initial Proposals), and in addition the previously whole ward of Quoile has also been split, in order to address the issue of access in the context of particular geographic features.

There was a discussion about the changes made in the revised proposed map scheme. It was noted that delineation has complex interdependencies – no constituency can be addressed in isolation, and that changes in one locality may have knock-on effects elsewhere. Commissioners must adhere to the statutory range in all constituencies, while also taking into account relevant considerations. Attendees thanked the Secretariat for the detailed presentation, and acknowledged the complexity of the various decisions.

# AOB

Attendees were apprised that BCNI’s Office Manager (LH) was moving on to a new role and so her last day with BCNI would be 30th September 2022. Commissioners expressed their thanks and wished her all the best in her new role.