

# Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland



## MEETING OF BCNI COMMISSIONERS AND ASSESSORS

**Date:** 12 January 2017 at 11.00am

**Location:** The Bungalow, Stormont Estate, Belfast

### In attendance:

The Hon Madam Justice McBride (Deputy Chairperson, BCNI)  
Dr Bill Smith (Commissioner, BCNI)  
Sarah Havlin (Commissioner, BCNI)  
Graham Shields, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (Assessor)  
John Deyermund, Chief Survey Officer, LPS (Assessor)  
Siobhan Carey, Registrar General, NISRA (Assessor)  
Virginia McVea, Incoming Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland (Assessor)  
Eamonn McConville (Secretary, BCNI)  
Michael Harris (Deputy Secretary, BCNI)  
Tim Johnston (Office Manager, BCNI)  
Adam McCalden (Secretariat, BCNI)

### Apologies:

Alan Bronte, Commissioner of Valuation, LPS (Assessor)

### Welcome & Introductions

1. The Deputy Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a happy new year. She explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to receive an update on the progress of the review and consider the actions required for the next stages of the review.

### Update from the Secretary

2. The Secretary provided an update on the following:
  - a) Provisional Proposals:
    - 12 week consultation ran from 6 September 2016 to 28 November 2016.
    - Four public consultation events were held during which 34 oral submissions were made.
    - A wide range of written representations (56 in total) were received during the consultation period.

- Overall, the quantity of responses was higher than for the previous aborted review, and in many cases the quality of responses was very high.

b) Annual Meeting:

The annual meeting of the UK commissions was hosted in Belfast on 8/9 December 2016 in the Stormont Hotel. Guest speakers were Sir Jonathan Stephens (NIO Permanent Secretary) and Nicholas Whyte. Feedback from those attending was very positive.

c) Secondary Consultation:

The Commission is now preparing for the secondary consultation period. It is working with LPS to produce maps of those submissions, received during the initial consultation, which provided alternative 17-seat constituency models. Analysis of submissions is due to be completed following the secondary consultation period. The intention had been to start the secondary consultation in mid-February, however the Commission will discuss the impact of recent local political developments and potential impending elections as a separate agenda item. The secondary consultation will be conducted online and the current timeframe for consultation on any revised proposals is autumn 2017.

d) Final Recommendations:

The Final recommendations are to be sent to the Secretary of State in October 2018 and the Commission is currently on target to achieve this deadline.

### **Review of Initial Consultation Submissions**

3. The Secretary provided an overview of the submissions received, making reference to the high number of good quality responses. Some of the issues raised during the initial consultation were –

- The splitting of major areas such as Newtownabbey, Lisburn and Ballymena
- Boundaries passing very close to major towns
- Dungannon being removed from Fermanagh & South Tyrone
- Names of constituencies
- Representation in Belfast – the reduction from 4 to 3 constituencies
- The use of Rule 7
- Splitting of wards in a limited number of instances

### **Timing of Secondary Consultation**

4. The Commissioners and Assessors discussed the current political situation and it was agreed that, in view of expected election and Purdah, the secondary consultation should

not take place until after the Assembly election. The Secretary confirmed that a short delay would not adversely affect the ability of the Commission to carry out its statutory requirements of reporting to the Secretary of State no later than 1 October 2018.

**Date of next meeting**

5. It was agreed that the next meeting of Commissioners and Assessors should take place in June of 2017. Should any matters arise in the interim, including the launch date of the secondary consultation once the election situation becomes clear, these can be handled by correspondence or a meeting convened if required.

**AP1 - Secretary to coordinate diaries. June 2017 proposed.**

**AOB**

6. On behalf of the Commission, the Deputy Chair and Secretary noted their thanks to Graham Shields, departing Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, wishing him well in his forthcoming retirement.
7. The Commission's hospitality register would be circulated to the Deputy Chair and Commissioners for updating in line with our good governance arrangements.

**AP2: - Secretariat to circulate hospitality register**

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January 2017**