Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Minutes of Meeting held on 2 November 2020 at 2.30pm

by Video Link

# In Attendance

Madam Justice Denise McBride, Deputy Chair (DMB)

Sarah Havlin, Commissioner (SH)

Vilma Patterson, Commissioner (VP)

Eamonn McConville, Secretary (EMC)

Andrea Richardson, Deputy Secretary (AR)

# **Correspondence**

Commissioners were updated on correspondence received and provided steer where appropriate.

# Amending Legislation

EMC updated the meeting about the passage of the Bill through Parliament. The Bill had completed its third reading in the House of Lords and would now be debated in the House of Commons. EMC advised that the timing of any public announcement regarding the 2023 Review would be informed by the Bill receiving Royal Assent.

# 2023 Review Preparations

EMC advised that a discussion with NIO was on-going in relation to the BCNI budget for 2021/22. The meeting was updated on recent discussions with EONI re sharing the electorate data. The meeting was informed that publication of the UK Electoral Quota by ONS was likely to be in early January 2021. The meeting discussed the support required by Commissioners to facilitate their work, including the provision of maps and analysis to aid their preliminary considerations at each stage of the process; and the possible need for contingency plans where mapping meetings in person are not possible due to public health restrictions. The meeting also discussed the need for the methodology and approach to the Review to be agreed, but that this would need to be informed by the amending legislation and the release of UK Electoral data.

EMC informed the meeting that the BCNI website had been audited in line with the new legislative requirements around accessibility, and engagement had taken place with IT providers regarding the various recommendations.

EMC advised that the Office Manager post has been advertised and that the Support Officer post will be advertised shortly.

# Proposed 2023 Review Timetable

EMC advised that given the likely timetable for Royal Assent and ONS figures, January 2021 may be the earliest point at which formal delineation work for 2023 Review could begin. The proposed timetable reflected this starting point along with sequencing based on the experience of the 2018 Review and the changes to the process being introduced this time around by the Bill. There were early plans to make coordinated announcements across the 4 Commissions to begin the 2023 Review so that everyone was announcing the allocated number of seats for each region at the same time.

# Potential Impact of Covid-19 on 2023 Review Logistics

The meeting continued discussions from the previous agenda item with particular reference to the impact of COVID-19 on public hearings, and the relevant legislation. This was a matter all 4 Commissions had an interest in, and would be discussing.

# Annual Conference of the four UK Boundary Commissions

It was agreed that SH would provide the conference update on behalf of BCNI. EMC advised that invitations and joining instructions had not yet been issued by LGBCE but that he would keep Members informed.

# Next Steps

It was agreed that a review of corporate documentation would be undertaken to ensure that the Commission was fulfilling all legislative requirements ahead of the 2023 Review.

# Next Meeting

It was agreed that EMC would check the availability of Members for the next BCNI meeting following the Annual Conference.

**BCNI Secretariat**

**3 November 2020**