

Our Year in Review

Annual Report
2010/11



East of Eng

Hertfordshire

Essex

London

Greater London

Surrey

South East

Sussex

East Sussex

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Boundary Commission For England

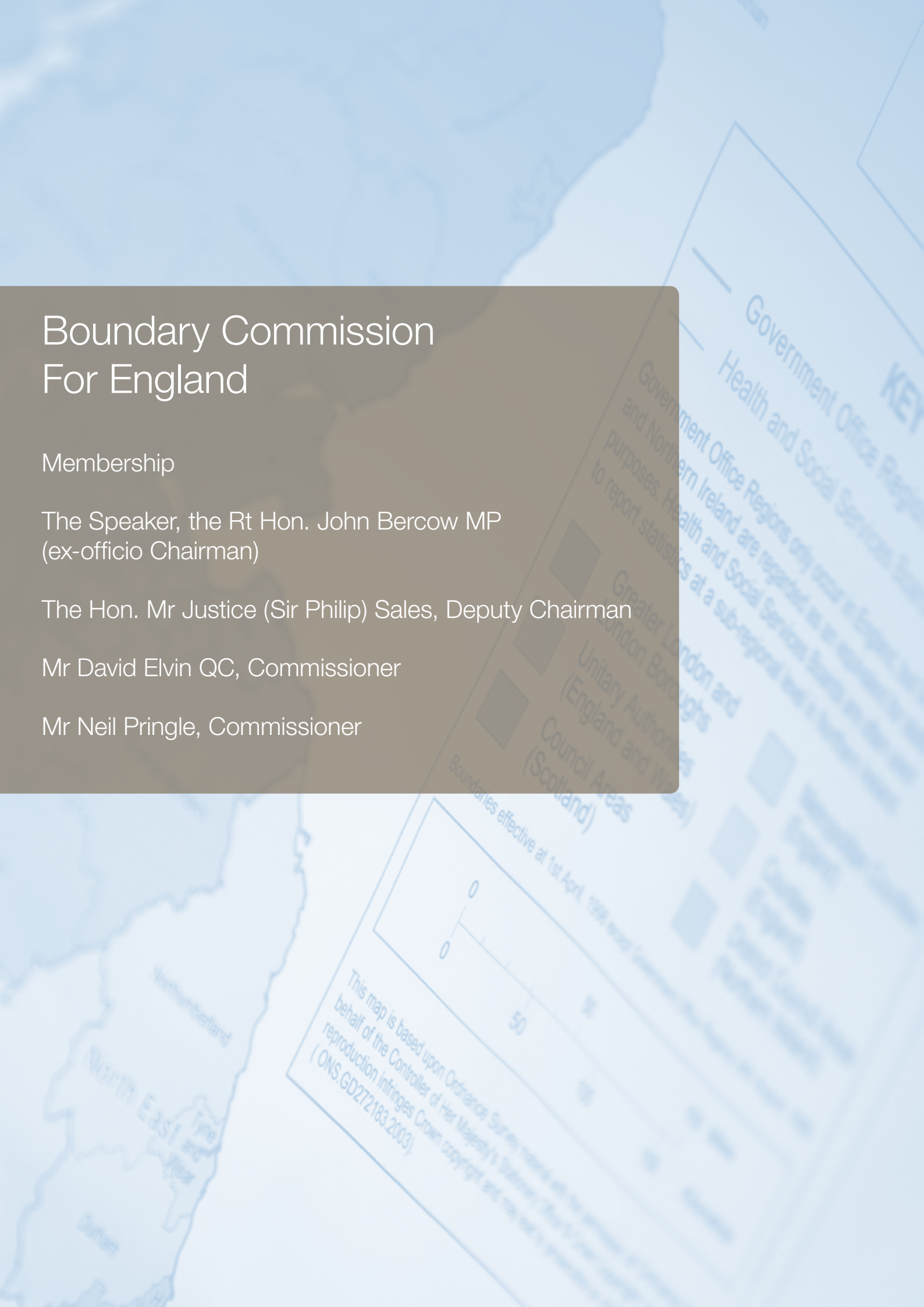
Membership

The Speaker, the Rt Hon. John Bercow MP
(ex-officio Chairman)

The Hon. Mr Justice (Sir Philip) Sales, Deputy Chairman

Mr David Elvin QC, Commissioner

Mr Neil Pringle, Commissioner



Deputy Chairman's Report

1. On 22 July 2010, the coalition Government published the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill. The Bill received Royal Assent on 16 February 2011 and will, inter alia, require the four Boundary Commissions to allocate precisely 600 constituencies to the UK and require that each constituency (with some limited exceptions) must have an electorate that is within 5% of the UK electoral quota.

2. To some degree, we had anticipated the introduction of a Bill that would reduce the number of constituencies when, in July 2009, we decided not to undertake any interim reviews of the 24 constituencies where the boundaries were out of alignment with local government boundaries. We had concluded that we would probably not be able to complete the interim reviews in time for the resulting new constituencies to be used at the general election. We had also noted that the manifestos published ahead of the general election by each of the three main Parliamentary political parties in England had indicated that it was possible that there would be change to the electoral system and, in particular, two had made reference to the possibility that the number of constituencies would be reduced. In the event, our decision not to undertake any interim reviews enabled us to concentrate our limited resources on the preparations that would be required to undertake the general review that commenced once the Bill had received Royal Assent.

Impact of reducing seats

3. In addition to a review of the methodology and policies that we would adopt for the general review, which we considered was likely to be of a very different nature to any review that we had previously undertaken, we instructed our Secretariat to start modelling for the distribution of a reduced number of constituencies for England. We considered this to be essential in order that we could understand some of the difficulties that would be associated with such a review.

Use of regions

4. One of our first considerations, before the modelling could start, was how we would allocate a precise number of constituencies. Prior to the changes introduced to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, we were required to allocate constituencies to individual counties and London boroughs (or pairs/groups of them) based upon their theoretical entitlements, without needing to have close regard to an overall number of constituencies. We decided that if we adopted the previous approach for our modelling it would, in all likelihood, not produce the required number of constituencies. We noted that the Bill made provision for us to take account of the electoral regions set out in Schedule 1 to the European Parliamentary Elections Act 2002. We considered that for the purposes of our modelling we should use the electoral regions as a template for allocating constituencies as this, combined with the use of the Sainte-Laguë method, would enable us to allocate the precise number of constituencies required. We then decided that, initially, within each electoral region we should, where possible, treat each county and London borough separately for the purposes of allocating constituencies. However, wherever that approach did not enable us to produce the correct number of constituencies for that region, we decided that we would pair or group counties and London boroughs, as we had done at previous general reviews, until the correct number of constituencies was allocated.

Local government district wards

5. We also decided that, for the purposes of the modelling, we should continue to use local government district wards (and electoral divisions in some of the unitary authorities) as the basic building block for constituencies. In doing this, we noted that we had used wards since the third general review and that no ward had been divided between constituencies since that time. Using wards as the building blocks for constituencies would allow us to benefit from the considerable information that was

available about them. The composition and the area of each ward is also clearly defined in a Statutory Instrument and electoral statistics for them are readily available from the Electoral Registration Officers for the districts in which they are located. Our experience from previous general reviews had also confirmed that any division of wards between constituencies would be likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations, cause difficulties for Electoral Registration and Returning Officers and, possibly, cause confusion to the electorate.

Modelling approach

6. In undertaking the modelling, our Secretariat did not, as might be assumed, adopt a 'clean-sheet' approach. It carefully considered each of the existing constituencies that had an electorate within the 5% electoral parity target and sought to make changes only to those where it was necessary to help with bringing the electorate of another constituency to within the 5% target. They also paid close regard to county and London borough boundaries and tried not to create constituencies that crossed them unless it was necessary to ensure that every constituency within each electoral region was within the 5% target.

7. When our Secretariat had completed the modelling, we gave very careful consideration to the distribution of constituencies in each electoral region and a number of matters became very clear to us. It was apparent that a reduction in the number of constituencies would require major changes to be made to the existing pattern of constituencies. The degree of change required would also be greatly increased by the statutory requirement that every constituency must have an electorate within 5% of the UK electoral quota and that, in all likelihood, this would mean that it would no longer be possible to respect county or London borough boundaries to the degree that had been achieved at previous general reviews. The 5% electoral parity target would also require that a number of communities (of differing size) might have to be divided between constituencies. We noted that the modelling suggested that only 10% of the existing constituencies might not be affected by change. With

this in mind, we would ask that those with an interest in the review process understand that the allocation of a precise number of constituencies and the 5% electoral parity target are statutory requirements that we are required to apply: we have no discretion in either matter.

8. The modelling also indicated that our Secretariat had been able to create every constituency with an electorate that was within 5% of the electoral target and had been able to do so without dividing a local government district ward between constituencies. We considered this to be a significant achievement but noted that it might not be possible to replicate this success once the new review started using the number of registered electors on the electoral registers published between 1 December 2010 and 1 February 2011. We concluded that wherever it would not be possible to meet the statutory 5% electoral parity target by allocating whole local government district wards to constituencies, we would be prepared to divide a ward but only to the extent necessary to meet the statutory 5% requirement. In such cases, we have decided that we will divide a ward into polling districts (which are determined by local authorities), as the electorates for these units can be calculated from the published electoral registers and it should be possible to obtain paper mapping for them from Ordnance Survey, with the assistance of the relevant Electoral Registration Officers. We consider that to do this in the few cases where it may prove necessary will be proportionate and appropriate in the context of carrying out our statutory function. It is also our view that it would not be proportionate or appropriate to divide wards in any circumstances where it is possible to construct constituencies that meet the statutory 5% requirement without so doing.

Electoral quota

9. On 4 March 2011, we issued Newsletter No.2/2011 which confirmed that the 2013 Review had commenced and that the four UK Boundary Commissions, using the 2011 electoral statistics published by the Office for National Statistics on 23 February 2011, had agreed that:

- England would be allocated 502 constituencies;
- Northern Ireland would be allocated 16 constituencies;
- Scotland would be allocated 52 constituencies;
- Wales would be allocated 30 constituencies;
- the UK electoral quota would be 76,641; and
- the electorate of every constituency (with some limited exceptions) must be no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473.

10. The Newsletter also explained that, in light of the new requirement to allocate a fixed number of constituencies to England, we were minded to use the electoral regions for the initial allocation of constituencies. It was explained that as this would represent a change from our previous methodology, we had decided to consult on the proposed use of the electoral regions and had invited written representations. The outcome from that consultation was very positive and, in light of that, we decided that the initial allocation of constituencies for the current general review would be made to the electoral regions.

Meeting with political parties

11. The Newsletter also confirmed that, as has been our practice at previous general reviews, we would hold a joint meeting with the representatives of the Parliamentary political parties representing constituencies in England. The meeting was held on 4 April 2011 and discussed the statutory rules which guide our work, the processes we are required to follow, and the broad issues of policy we would adopt to conduct the review. The meeting did not consider any specific boundary proposals. The representatives were also informed that, as with previous general reviews, we would issue an information booklet to assist with making the review process more widely known and understood. The booklet was published in spring 2011 and is

available from our website (www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland) or from 35 Great Smith Street, London SW1 3BQ.

12. We expect the initial proposals for the 2013 Review to be announced in mid September. When we publish our initial proposals for constituency boundaries, there will follow a period during which representations may be made to us about our proposals. We would ask that those who submit representations confirm whether they approve of, or object to, the initial proposals and, more importantly, give reasons for their approval or objection. In particular, those who object will be required to say what it is they propose in place of the initial proposals. Those objecting to the initial proposals and proposing changes should also consider the impact on neighbouring constituencies of any counter-proposal they submit. In order to be effective, a counter-proposal should therefore not propose changes to one constituency without considering how those changes impact on neighbouring constituencies, because we have a statutory responsibility to produce a comprehensive scheme for England.

13. We are required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) to submit our report to the Secretary of State before 1 October 2013. This is a very demanding timetable which we will try to meet.

Philip Sales
Deputy Chairman

June 2011



The Boundary Commission for England is an advisory non-departmental public body which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office.

Introduction

The Sponsor

1. The Boundary Commission for England is an advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB) which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office. Following the agreement to form the coalition Government, the Prime Minister announced the areas of political reform for which the Deputy Prime Minister would have direct responsibility. This resulted in the transfer of responsibility for the Boundary Commission for England from the Ministry of Justice to the Cabinet Office: the change was effective from 2 June 2010.
2. This was the fifth change of sponsoring department that the Commission has experienced in 10 years and, as with previous sponsorship changes, the Commission confirms that it will not affect its independent status or its working relationship with government. The staff that form the Secretariat to the Boundary Commission for England transferred to the Cabinet Office and are now located on the Cabinet Office estate.

The Commission

3. The Commission is constituted under Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended). The Commission is an independent, non-political and impartial body and it takes every opportunity to emphasise that the results of previous elections do not, and should not, enter into its considerations. Nor does it consider the effects of its recommendations on future voting patterns.
4. The Commission is required to submit periodical reports in respect of the Parliamentary constituencies to the Secretary of State (the Deputy Prime Minister). It is his statutory duty to lay the reports before Parliament together with the draft of an Order in Council giving effect to the Commission's recommendations.

Membership of the Commission

5. The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of all four Boundary Commissions in the UK. The appointment of the Speaker further

emphasises the independent, impartial and non-political nature of the Commission. The Speaker plays no part in the conduct of reviews.

6. The Deputy Chairman of the Commission, who presides over meetings, is a High Court judge appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The current Deputy Chairman, who was appointed with effect from 1 June 2009, is the Honourable Mr Justice (Sir Philip) Sales. The two other members of the Commission are Mr David Elvin QC, who was appointed with effect from 12 January 2009, and Mr Neil Pringle, who was appointed with effect from 1 July 2009.

7. The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme requires at the Secretariat offices in London. Since the passing of the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the Commissioners (not including the Deputy Chairman) are paid a daily fee set by the Treasury and, together with the Deputy Chairman, are entitled to recover any expenses incurred on Commission work.

Code of Practice

8. The Commission maintains a Code of Practice and a Register of Members' Interests. These documents are updated annually and can be accessed on the Commission's website.

Assessors

9. There are two statutory assessors, i.e. technical advisers, to the Commission. They are the Director General of Ordnance Survey and the Registrar General for England and Wales. Both are represented at Commission meetings by deputies, whenever the Commission has a need to consult them on their areas of expertise.

Assistant Commissioners

10. The Commission will ask the Secretary of State to appoint a panel of Assistant Commissioners to assist it with the current general review. The Assistant Commissioners will be required to chair the public hearings that the Commission is now

statutorily required to hold. They will also be asked to undertake an assessment of the representations submitted to the Commission in respect of its initial proposals and to undertake an assessment of the counter-representations made in respect of the representations, once they are published. The Assistant Commissioners will also be required to submit reports, with recommendations, to the Commission. The Assistant Commissioners will be paid a daily rate set by the Treasury when they work for the Commission.

The Secretariat

11. The Secretary to the Commission is Mr Simon James, who heads the Secretariat which currently consists of 20 other full-time staff. The role of the Secretariat is to service and assist the Commission in its conduct of reviews and in executing the decisions it takes. The Secretariat may be contacted at the address on page 5 of this report.

Statutory duties

12. The Commission's statutory function is to keep under review the distribution of constituencies in England and to make periodical reports with recommendations to the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

13. The current general review of the constituencies in England, which will be the first under the provisions introduced by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which further amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, will require the Commission to allocate 502 constituencies to England: a reduction of 31. Each constituency will be required to have an electorate that is within 5% of the UK electoral quota (76,641).

14. Once the Commission has completed its consideration of the distribution of the constituencies, it will announce its provisional representations. Interested parties will have a 12-week period in which to submit representations of support or objection.

During the consultation period, the Commission will hold public hearings so that oral submissions can be made to it. The Commission will then be required to make the representations submitted during the 12-week period available so that interested parties can consider them and submit counter-representations during a further four-week period. Once the four-week period for counter-representations has closed, the Assistant Commissioners will be asked to consider:

- the initial proposals;
- the representations made received in respect of them;
- the oral submissions made at the public hearings; and
- the counter-representations against the requirements of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

15. The Assistant Commissioners will be asked to submit reports with recommendations to the Commission. Once the reports have been considered, the Commission may decide to announce revised proposals for those constituencies forming part of the initial proposals where change has been recommended by the Assistant Commissioners. If revised recommendations are announced, a period of eight weeks will be available during which representations can be made to the Commission. Further public hearings will not be held and there will not be a period during which counter-representations can be submitted.

16. The Commission is required to submit its report on the current general review to the Deputy Prime Minister before 1 October 2013. Subsequent reports will be required to be submitted every five years thereafter.

Consultation

Liaison with other bodies

17. Throughout the year, the Secretariat maintained regular contact with the sponsor department. Meetings were held, and information exchanged, with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Meetings also took place with Ordnance Survey to discuss the paper and digital mapping requirements for the general review, and electoral statistics were exchanged and discussed with the Office for National Statistics.

18. The Secretariat also maintained contact with the Electoral Registration Officers throughout England. The Commission was represented at the annual meeting of the UK Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions which took place in Edinburgh in November 2010.

Reporting progress

19. The Commission issued three Newsletters during the financial year. The first (No.1/2010, 16 June 2010) confirmed the Machinery of Government change that resulted in a change to the Commission's sponsorship arrangements. The second (No.1/2011, 27 January 2011) confirmed the Parliamentary progress of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill, the appointment of a new Secretary to the Commission, and the Secretariat's change of accommodation. The third (No.2/2011 4 March 2011) confirmed the new statutory framework established by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, and consulted on the use of electoral regions for the initial allocation of constituencies across England. The Secretariat also provided reports to the Cabinet Office about its progress with the preparations for the general review.

Objectives

Overall objective

20. The Commission's overall objective during 2010/11 was to keep under review the representation of England in the House of Commons.

Specific objectives for 2010/11

21. The specific objectives for the Commission during the 2010/11 financial year, were to:

- Hold a maximum of four meetings to conduct the required work.
 - Consider whether any interim reviews were required as a result of:
 - a) changes made to local government boundaries resulting from the creation of new unitary authorities;
 - b) changes made to local government district ward boundaries by further electoral reviews;
 - c) changes made to local government district ward boundaries as a result of Parish and Ward Electoral Changes Orders made by the Electoral Commission; and
 - d) electoral growth or decline.
 - Update databases with the 2011 (1 December 2010) electoral statistics.
 - Update the Geographic Information System (GIS) with the 2011 electoral statistics and the 2010 version of Boundary Line.
 - Attend and contribute to the annual meeting of the UK Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions held in Edinburgh in November 2010.
- Recruit a panel of Assistant Commissioners.
 - Procure a transcription service.
 - Contribute to any discussions relating to a reduction in the number of constituencies allocated to England.

Targets

Outcomes of specific targets

22. The outcomes of the specific targets for the objectives which are set out above were as follows:

- Hold a maximum of four meetings to conduct the required work.

Five meetings were required to conclude the business of the Commission. An extra meeting was made necessary by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which further amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 and required the Commission to commence a general review of constituencies.

- Consider whether any interim reviews were required as a result of:

a) changes made to local government boundaries resulting from the creation of new unitary authorities;

b) changes made to local government district ward boundaries by further electoral reviews;

c) changes made to local government district ward boundaries as a result of Parish and Ward Electoral Changes Orders made by the Electoral Commission; and

d) electoral growth or decline.

The Commission decided not to conduct an interim review for any of the 24 constituencies where it might normally be considered appropriate, as it was apparent that the Commission would be required to start a general review which would require the number of constituencies to be reduced and make nugatory the conduct of an interim review.

- Update databases with the 2011 (1 December 2010) electoral statistics.

The Commission's databases were updated.

- Attend and contribute to the annual meeting of the UK Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions.

The Commission was represented at the annual meeting held in Edinburgh on 4 November 2010 by Mr Neil Pringle (Commissioner), Mr Simon James and Mr Bob Farrance. The meeting was informed about the Commission's work programme for the 2009/10 financial year and for the first half of the 2010/11 financial year which, in the main, related to its preparations for the general review it expected it would be required to undertake.

The Commission was also represented by its full membership, and some of its officials, at a meeting of all the UK Parliamentary Boundary Commissions that was held in Cardiff on 21 March 2011. The meeting considered a number of matters relating to the conduct of the general review in each country.

- Recruit a panel of Assistant Commissioners.

It was decided to defer the recruitment of a panel of Assistant Commissioners once it became known that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill would abolish the conduct of local inquiries.

- Procure a transcription service.

It was also decided to defer this procurement because of the abolition of local inquiries.

- Contribute to any discussions relating to a reduction in the number of constituencies allocated to England.

The Government published the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill on 22 July 2010. Both prior to and following publication, officials from the Elections and Democracy Division of the Constitution Directorate of the Cabinet Office consulted with the Commission and its officials on technical matters relating to clauses in the Bill (insofar as they related to the review of constituencies) and the relationship between the new rules for the distribution of constituencies and potential difficulties in respect of their operability.

Additional target

- Publish the 2011 electoral statistics.

The Commission published the 2011 electoral statistics (1 December 2010) on 4 March 2011 (ahead of its original schedule) to inform the conduct of the general review.



North West
Lancashire

Yorkshire and The Humber

North Yorkshire

West Yorkshire

York

East Riding
of Yorkshire

North
Lincolnshire

KHI

NEL

Budget and Expenditure

2010/11

23. Prior to the start of the financial year, the Commission agreed a budget of £386,000 with the sponsor department. Once it became known that the Government intended to publish a Bill that would require a review to be conducted to reduce the number of constituencies in England, the Commission

agreed a revised budget of £851,495 with the sponsor. Table 1 provides a quarterly profile of the planned and actual staffing of the Secretariat during the financial year. Table 2 compares the Commission's actual expenditure during the year against the final budget agreed with, and provided by, the sponsor.

Table 1: Staff complement (head count)

Grade	1/4/2010		1/7/2010		1/10/2010		1/1/2011	
	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual
Grade 6	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Grade 7	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
SEO	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
HEO	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	5.00
EO	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	9.00
Total	5.00	5.00	7.00	7.00	9.00	9.00	20.00	20.00

It should be noted that in those quarters where increases in the Secretariat staffing profile are recorded, staff did not necessarily join at the beginning of that quarter.

Table 2: Budget and expenditure by subhead, 2010/11

Budget component	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)	Difference (£)
Salaries including NI and pensions	544,254	439,435 ¹	104,819 ²
Travel and subsistence	8,000	688	7,312 ³
Conferences and events	5,000	0	5,000 ⁴
Other travel i.e. Commissioner fees and expenses	50,550	15,274	35,276 ⁵
Legal fees	25,000	288	24,712 ⁶
GIS technical support (ESRI UK)	53,985	80,062	-26,077 ⁷
Software and licences (Ordnance Survey)	43,816	17,057	26,759 ⁸
Hardware	92,000	14,637	77,363 ⁹
Hospitality	1,440	457	983 ¹⁰
Staff training	11,400	3,061	8,339 ¹¹
Postage	1,330	1,350	-20 ¹²
Stationery, publications and IT consumables	3,392	2,842	550 ¹³
Publicity	4,000	835	3,165 ¹⁴
Print services	6,500	2,088	4,412 ¹⁵
Records data and storage	828	762	66
Grand total	851,495	578,836	272,659

¹ The figure for permanent staff is £378,676. The figure of £439,435 includes £60,759, the estimated figure for two staff on secondment for which it has not yet been possible to confirm salary costs with the parent department/body

² New staff joined the Secretariat later in the year than envisaged

³ Fewer external meetings requiring the Commission's attendance were held

⁴ No external events were held

⁵ Considerably less time than anticipated was required of Commission Members to conduct work in the office

⁶ Very little legal advice was sought from Treasury Solicitors

⁷ Overspend due to additional data loads and restoration of GIS as a result of the Machinery of Government transfer of the Secretariat from Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to Cabinet Office

⁸ The Commission was not charged for its website hosting by MoJ and fewer mapping products were required

⁹ The Commission was not charged as expected for new hardware following Machinery of Government transfer

¹⁰ Fewer meetings were held that required hospitality

¹¹ Fewer staff learning events were undertaken

¹² Slight overspend mostly due to courier despatch of papers to Commission Members

¹³ Less stationery required than anticipated

¹⁴ Less publicity and advertising required than anticipated

¹⁵ Less requirement for the production of documents

Monitoring expenditure

24. The Secretariat maintained financial information spreadsheets that recorded by date, topic, sub-head and component every item of expenditure. Each month, the Secretariat met with officials from the Elections and Democracy Division of the Cabinet Office in order to confirm monthly expenditure and to provide accurate financial information reports, to profile expenditure for the financial year, confirm quarterly expenditure and report on potential underspends or overspends.

Outline Work Programme for 2011/12

Programme

25. In the 2011/12 financial year, the budget agreed with the Cabinet Office is £3,235,986. The Commission expects to:

- Hold three or four meetings to progress the conduct of the general review.
 - Issue Newsletters and News Releases that provide information about the review.
 - Meet with the representatives of the Parliamentary political parties to discuss broad issues of policy relating to the general review.
 - Issue an Information Booklet to inform the general review.
 - Recruit a panel of Assistant Commissioners.
 - Publish initial proposals for all 502 constituencies in England in mid September 2011 and invite written representations to be made during a 12-week period.
 - Hold public hearings in respect of the initial proposals in November and December 2011 so that oral submissions can be made.
 - Publish the representations (both written and oral) so that counter-representations can be submitted during a four-week period.
 - Prepare the representations made in respect of the initial proposals (both written and oral) and the counter-representations, for consideration by the Assistant Commissioners.
- Update databases with the 2012 (1 December 2011) electoral statistics in March 2012.
 - Attend and contribute to the annual meeting of the UK Parliamentary and Local Government Boundary Commissions to be held in Belfast.

Table 3: Agreed budget for 2011/12

Budget component	Budget (£)
Salaries including NI and pensions	1,115,747
Travel and subsistence	52,000
Public hearings, conferences and events	60,000
Other travel i.e. Commissioner fees and expenses	105,880
Legal fees	25,000
GIS technical support (ESRI UK)	57,375
Software and licences (Ordnance Survey)	258,341
Hardware	0
Hospitality	2,200
Staff training	13,860
Postage	5,000
Stationery, publications and IT consumables	10,421
Publicity	1,332,000
Print services	47,166
Records data and storage	996
Public hearing transcription fees	150,000
Grand total	3,235,986



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