

**BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR  
ENGLAND**



***ANNUAL REPORT***

***2018/2019***



## **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

### **Membership**

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

The Hon. Mr Justice Andrew Nicol, Deputy Chair

Colin Byrne, Commissioner

Sarah Hamilton, Commissioner

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## **Information about the Boundary Commission for England**

### **The sponsor**

1. The Boundary Commission for England is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), which is sponsored by the Cabinet Office. The Secretariat staff and corporate functions such as Finance, IT and HR support are all provided by the Cabinet Office, which also oversees the corporate governance arrangements for the Commission.

### **The Commission**

2. 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 and voting patterns of previous elections do not, and should not, enter into its considerations. Nor does it consider the possible effects of its recommendations on future voting patterns.

3. The Commission is required to submit periodical reports in respect of the parliamentary constituencies in England to the Government. It is the Government's statutory duty to subsequently lay before Parliament both the final report from our Review, and the draft of an Order in Council giving effect to the Commission's recommendations.

### **Membership of the Commission**

4. The Speaker of the House of Commons is the ex-officio Chairman of all four Boundary Commissions in the United Kingdom. The appointment of the Speaker emphasises the independent, impartial, and non-political nature of the Commission. The Speaker plays no part in the actual conduct of reviews.

5. The Deputy Chair of the Boundary Commission for England, who presides over meetings, is a High Court judge appointed by the Lord Chancellor. The Deputy Chair is the Honourable Mr Justice Nicol (appointment effective until 26 March 2020). The two other Members of the Commission during the period covered by this report were Mr David Elvin QC (appointment expired 11 January 2019), and Mr Neil Pringle (appointment expired 30 June 2019). Two new Commissioners were appointed with effect from 1 July 2019, both for an initial five-year term: Colin Byrne and Sarah Hamilton.

6. The Commissioners are part-time appointees who meet whenever the work programme requires it. The Commissioners (not including the Deputy Chair) are paid a daily fee set by the Treasury and, together with the Deputy Chair, are entitled to recover any expenses incurred on Commission work.

### **Code of Practice**

7. The Commission adheres to the Cabinet Office's code of conduct for board members of public bodies. It also maintains a Register of Members' Interests, which is updated at least annually and can be accessed on the Commission's website.

### **Assessors**

8. There are two statutory assessors - i.e. technical advisers - to the Commission. They are the Director General of Ordnance Survey, and the Statistics Authority. Both are represented at Commission meetings by officials, whenever the Commission has a need to consult them on their areas of expertise. The Commission did not require the presence of the Assessors at its meetings during 2018-19.

### **Assistant Commissioners**

9. The Commission may arrange for Assistant Commissioners to be appointed by the Secretary of State to assist it with its work. The Assistant Commissioners are paid a daily rate set by the Treasury when they work for the Commission. During the 2018-19 financial year, the Commission did not call upon the services of its Assistant Commissioners.

### **The Secretariat**

10. The Secretary to the Commission was Mr Sam Hartley until 21 September 2018, since when his Deputy, Tony Bellringer, has been the Acting Secretary to the Commission. The Secretary heads the Secretariat, the role of which is to service and assist the Commission in its conduct of reviews and executing the decisions it takes, and generally to facilitate the smooth and efficient administration of the Commission's business. The Secretariat may be contacted at the address at the front 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. During an active general review of the constituencies in England, by virtue of the provisions introduced by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (which amended the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986), the Commission allocate a defined number of constituencies to England, the precise number being calculated using a formula defined in the Act and producing a figure broadly in proportion to the size of England's electorate as against that of the whole United Kingdom. Each constituency is also required to have an electorate that is within 5% of the United Kingdom 'electoral quota' (also defined in the Act).



14. It is important to emphasise that these calculations are specified in the Act, with the raw electorate data being that produced by electoral registration officers in local authorities. Neither the formulae nor the raw data are open to debate by the Commission.

15. Once the Commission has completed its initial consideration of the distribution of the constituencies allocated to England under the Act, it announces its initial proposals. Interested parties have a twelve-week period in which to submit representations of support or objection. During this initial consultation period, the Commission holds public hearings, so that oral submissions can be made to it, as well as written representations. The Commission is then required to make the representations submitted during the twelve-week period available, so that interested parties can consider them and submit counter-representations during a further four-week period. Once the four week 'secondary consultation' period for counter-representations has closed, Assistant Commissioners are usually asked to consider:

- the Commission's initial proposals;
- any written and oral representations received in respect of those; and
- any counter-representations received

also taking into account a number of statutory factors listed in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended).

16. The Assistant Commissioners are subsequently asked to submit recommendations to the Commission on possible adjustments to the initial proposals, taking into account all the evidence from consultation. Once those recommendations have been considered, the Commission may decide to amend its initial proposals for constituencies in certain areas. The Commission may also propose no change, or their own changes, in light of the evidence presented by the Assistant Commissioners. If revised proposals are announced, a period of eight weeks is made available, during which representations on those revised proposals can be made to the Commission. Further public hearings are not held at this stage, and there is no subsequent period for counter-representations to be submitted.

17. Having considered representations received in response to any revised proposals, the Commission will then make its final decisions on recommendations for constituencies across England, and must then submit its final report and recommendations to the Government at a time specified in the Act (for the 2018 Review, this is specified as during September 2018), with subsequent reports to be submitted every five years thereafter.

## Objectives 2018/19

### Overall objective

18. The Commission's clear focus this year has been making its final decisions on recommended in the 2018 Review, followed by the mechanical business of having those drawn up and formally submitted to Government within the statutory September 2018 window. As may be expected, with the next scheduled review in the statutory five year cycle not then due to commence until early 2021, activity for the Commission and its secretariat in the latter half of the year has been very limited.

### Main objectives for 2018/19, with outcomes

19. The main objectives for the Commission during the financial year 2018/19 were:

- **By the end of May 2018, hold formal meetings to make decisions on what the final recommendations will be.** The Commissioners held a number of formal meetings to determine what their final recommendations would be, between 19 April and 22 May 2018. The papers and notes of these meetings are available to view on the Commission's website.
- **By the end of June 2018, approve draft text of the final report of the 2018 Review.** Following the Commission meetings to determine the recommendations, the secretariat drafted the text of the final report that underpinned and set the context for those recommendations, and cleared all of this text with Commissioners by email.
- **By the end of July 2018, conclude quality assurance checks on the final reports and associated data.** Following clearance of the narrative text of the final report with Commissioners, the secretariat then conducted a thorough consistency and quality assurance check of all the data in the report, including electorate figures, ward/constituency/place name spelling, and (in conjunction with the contracted printers) general editorial proof-reading.
- **In September 2018, formally submit the final report and recommendations from the 2018 Review to the Government. Publication to follow as soon as possible once the report has been laid before Parliament by the Government (as required by the legislation).** The Commission formally handed its final report and recommendations to the Government on 5 September 2018. The Government subsequently laid that report before Parliament on 10 September 2018, and the Commission therefore published it on its website later that same day.
- **By the end of March 2019, collect Parliamentary electorate data from all local electoral registration officers in England, as at the date of statutory annual publication of their register, and complete checking and verification.** All data was collected from local electoral registration

officers, although the Commission secretariat did experience some difficulties in obtaining responses to questions of clarification put to some EROs during the verification process.

- **During the course of the year, aim to hold at least two formal meetings to assess progress with the Review and make key decisions, and also be represented at the Annual Meeting of UK Boundary Commissions.** The Commission met formally on: 19 April, 14 May, 21 May, and 22 May 2018. These meetings were primarily to determine the Commissions' final decisions on constituency recommendations for the 2018 Review. The Commission was represented at the Annual Meeting of UK Boundary Commissions in Edinburgh by the Acting Secretary to the Commission (the former Secretary to the Commission also attended).

### Budget and expenditure 2018/19

20. The Commission agreed an **initial budget of £580,295** with the sponsor Department, which it considered would be necessary to deliver the substantive elements to conclude the 2018 Review, and subsequently maintain a residual function during the 2018-19 financial year. Two tables are set out below. The first provides a quarterly profile of the planned and actual staffing levels of the Secretariat during the financial year. The second compares the Commission's actual expenditure during the year against the initial budget agreed with the Cabinet Office as sponsor Department. The Commission was able to achieve an **underspend against budget of £37,170**.

#### Staff complement (Full Time Equivalent)

	Apr-Jun 2018		Jul-Sep 2018		Oct-Dec 2018		Jan-Mar 2019	
Grade	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual
SCS	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Band A	2	2	2	0.4	1	0.4	1	0.4
Band B2	7	7	5	5	3	3	1	1
Band B1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Band C	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Temp staff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.4</b>

Figures shown represent the position as at the end of the relevant financial quarter.

#### 2018/19 Budget and expenditure by subhead (figures supplied by Cabinet Office)

Budget component	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)*	Variance (£)
Pay and related costs	397,000	390,296	6,704

Travel and subsistence costs	1,700	2,620	-920
Accommodation costs	48,100	17,957	30,143
IT and equipment costs	99,040	108,738	-9,698
Personnel related costs	800	700	100
Other professional services	-	2,448	-2,448
Marketing and media	5,000	29,099	-24,099
Other goods and services	25,900	3,495	22,405
Training and development	2,755	1,308	1,447
Conferences and hospitality costs	-	578	-578
Contractors	-	-	-
Miscellaneous expenditure	-	4	-4
Recharge of pro rata costs of consultation website to BCS and BCW	-	-14,117	14,117
<b>Total</b>	<b>580,295</b>	<b>543,125**</b>	<b>37,170**</b>

\*Rounded up or down to the nearest pound.

\*\*Rounded to nearest pound from total derived from detailed (not rounded) component expenditure and variance figures.

### Monitoring expenditure

21. The Secretariat maintained information that recorded by date, topic, sub-head, and component, every item of expenditure. Each month, the Secretariat met with officials from the Cabinet Office central finance team, in order to confirm monthly expenditure and to provide accurate financial reports, to profile expenditure for the financial year, confirm quarterly expenditure, and report on potential under-spends or over-spends.

## Outline work programme and budget for 2019/20

### Programme

22. The 2019/20 financial year will see the Commission in its quietest inter-review period under the cycle of constituency reviews mandated by the current legislation. The budget provisionally agreed with the Cabinet Office is **£103,560** and the Commission expects to:

- By the end of May 2019, collate and publish parliamentary electorate data from all local electoral registration officers in England, illustrating changes in electorate size in existing constituencies.
- By the end of June 2019, support the sponsor Department in the appointment of two new Commissioners, to ensure the Commission remains quorate.
- During the course of the year, aim to hold at least one formal meeting of Commissioners to maintain governance oversight and make key strategic planning and policy decisions relating to the next scheduled constituencies review.
- By the end of November 2019, organise and deliver the Annual Meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions.
- By March 2020, produce an evaluation report on the administration of the 2018 Review, highlighting areas that could be improved and instances of good practice.

### Budget for 2019/20 by subhead

Budget component	Budget 19/20 (£)
Pay and related costs	85,560
Travel and subsistence costs, and hospitality	600
Accommodation costs	1,000
IT and equipment costs	10,000
Personnel related costs	0
Other professional services	0
Marketing and media	0
Other goods and services	5,400
Training and development	1,000
Contractors	0
Miscellaneous expenditure	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103,560</b>