



BCE/2020/3rd meeting

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

Notice of meeting

The presence of Commissioners is requested at a meeting to be held at the St Matthew's Conference Centre, at 11.30 on 7 December 2020.

AGENDA

1. Welcome and minutes of the last meeting (PL)
2. 2023 Review Programme update (est 20 minutes) - **Paper 1** (TBo)
 - a. Timetable
 - b. Risk register
 - c. Highlight report
3. Policies for the 2023 Review (est 40 minutes) - **Paper 2** (TBe)
4. Assistant Commissioner recruitment (est 30 minutes) - **Paper 3** (WT/TBo)
5. Any other business

Close (13.00 - 13.15)

Tim Bowden
Secretary to the Commission

2023 Review programme update

Programme documentation will be provided to Commissioners for all scheduled Commission meetings, and will also be sent to them at regular intervals in between.

Update since the last meeting

1. Commissioners last met on 11 September 2020, since then progress has been made on a number of operational areas.

Staffing and recruitment

2. The final Review Manager started in post in October and five Review Officers have now joined the Commission. The remaining four Review Officers will start in December and early in the new year. In the corporate team, the business assistant starts in the new year and we are currently advertising the business manager role. We are also actively recruiting for the communications manager post, working with Government Communications Service to fill this vacancy.
3. For our new starters we have rolled out a thorough induction and training programme. I am particularly pleased that on day-one a new starter has met a member of the team in person.

Finance

4. During summer 2020, the Secretariat contributed forecast figures to the recent Spending Review process to provisionally agree allocations covering the duration of the next Review. As Commissioners are aware, the Secretariat is likely to be asked to undertake further work on justifying its forecast and is expected to be asked if any savings could be made.
5. As I have previously set out to Commissioners, the 2023 Boundary Review is a statutory function, with many legally defined stages and procedures. Therefore, large proportions of our forecast are non negotiable. That said, the Secretariat will investigate if any savings could be made and what impact this may have to the integrity of the Review.

Accommodation

6. Prior to the recent lockdown, an assessment was conducted of the office (35 Great Smith Street) to identify the number of desks currently available to use (presently eight) whilst ensuring compliance with COVID requirements. Staff are able to work in the office if needed (including for wellbeing reasons) and we will review our current working arrangements once any COVID restrictions are eased.

Parliamentary Constituencies Bill

7. The Bill completed its passage in Parliament on 26 November. It is likely to receive Royal Assent in mid-December 2020. The only change made during its passage in the Lords was to time bound the laying of the Order to give effect to the Commission's final recommendations.

Electorate data

8. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) is due to publish the electorate data used for the 2023 Review (registers as at 2 March 2020) on 5 January 2021. We are currently engaging with ONS to have permission for the four UK Boundary Commissions to share this data in advance of 5 January 2021. Sharing the data will allow the Commissions to calculate the allocation of constituencies across the four nations (and to regions in England), and calculate the electorate quota (and minimum and maximum electorates permissible).
9. Once ONS has published the data, we will then be in a position to formally launch the 2023 Review i.e. publish the allocations and figures outlined above. Generally, all of the UK Commissions have launched the Review on the same day and we consider a similar approach is taken this time.
10. Given the Act will require the Commission to have regard to prospective ward boundaries, we are working closely with ONS and the relevant local authorities to ensure the data is compiled in this way.

Technology

11. We have awarded the contract for the geographic information system (GIS) to Informed Solutions. They also provided the GIS to the Commission at the 2018 Review. The GIS is currently being updated and we expect to take delivery of the new system before the end of 2020. We have formulated a specification for the interactive consultation website and agreed with Boundary Commission Scotland and Boundary Commission Wales to jointly undertake this work. We are currently working with the Cabinet Office Digital and Technology Team (DaTT) to issue the procurement for the consultation website.

12. Working with our corporate website provider, we have completed an accessibility audit to identify how it complied with accessibility regulations. Generally, the audit was positive and we are working with the supplier on remedial actions.

Communications

13. A communication and advertising strategy will be developed for the 2023 Review in due course. In the meantime, the team has engaged with a creative supplier to discuss the idea of a short animated video to outline the 2023 Review. We are working with the same supplier to ensure any recommendations from the accessibility audit (e.g. branding colour palette) are applied consistently across the Commissions materials (e.g. hardcopy reports).

Timetable

14. The timetable for the 2023 Review is set out at **Annex A** in the form of a project plan. The project plan is a 'living document', which is expected to reflect changes in the timetable as they are required. Dates and the description of activities will therefore generally be more broad the further away they are in time, becoming more specific and detailed as they come closer. The project plan at Annex A will form the baseline for the 2023 Review, against which the Commission will be able to measure performance.

Risk register

15. Good management of the review involves use of a specific risk register to expressly identify and track both the key risks to the success of the project, and the mitigating actions taken to keep those risks within acceptable levels.
16. A risk register for the 2023 Review is at **Annex B**. The risk register is also maintained as a 'living document', with new risks added as they may arise, ongoing risks modified as they decrease/increase, and fully mitigated. The most significant change to the risk register is the reduction in the legislative change score, as the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill concluding its passage has provided more certainty in this area.

Highlight report

17. The Highlight report at **Annex C** is the key 'one-pager' summary document where Commissioners can see at a glance all the most recent developments in relation

to the project, whether that be new activities, changes to significant risks, and/or shifts in the projected delivery dates for certain activities or milestones.

Frequency

18. In addition to issuing all three documents for Commission meetings, as agreed at the previous meeting, the project plan and risk register are issued to Commissioners on a quarterly basis, and the highlight report issued monthly. Any matters of a particularly notable or pressing nature are, of course, raised with Commissioners directly outside of this regular information stream, via the Secretary or other member of the senior staff.

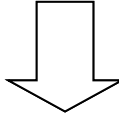
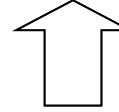
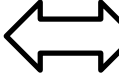

Strategic Risk Register: 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies															
1	2	3	4	5,6,7 - Inherent Risk			8	9	10	11,12,13 - Residual Risk			14	15	16
Risk ID	Title	Description / Indicators	Owner	Impact	Likelihood	Severity level	Response	Controls	Mitigation status	Impact	Likelihood	Severity level	Risk trend and status	Appetite	Actions required
	Broad title	Description of risk and / or indicators	SLT member	Severe; significant; moderate; minor; insignificant	Negligible; remote; possible; likely; almost certain	Red; amber; green	Transfer; tolerate; treat; terminate	Internal controls	Red; amber; green.	Severe; significant; moderate; minor; insignificant	Negligible; remote; possible; likely; almost certain	Red; amber; green	Trend: Reducing; increasing; static; new	Red; amber; green	Actions required to ensure that residual risk = appetite
1	Legal challenge to BCE	A legal challenge to the review policies or procedures delays the delivery timetable and/or demands additional staff / financial resource to address	TBo	Significant	Possible	12	Treat	Commission formulated provisional policies. Commission met with political parties.		Significant	Remote	8	↔	8	1. Review of all internal policies and procedures; 2. production of Guide clearly outlining policies, practices and legal obligations or interpretations; 3. Equality Analysis to be conducted; 4. legal advice sought when appropriate; 5. Commission meetings and associated communications with qualifying political parties; 6. regular quality assurance of
2	Legislative change	Changes are made to the primary legislation governing the structure of the Commission and/or the procedures for a review.	TBo	Severe	Possible	16	Tolerate	Parliamentary Constituencies Bill completed its passage in Parliament; Local Authorities providing required electorate data based on the Bill		Moderate	Likely	12	↓	9	1. As legislative change is ultimately a matter for Parliament, there is realistically little mitigating action that the Commission can (or should) take to prevent it. Although communications with the sponsor team will continue.
3	Human resource	Insufficient numbers and expertise levels of Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and staff inhibit the delivery of the review	WT	Severe	Possible	16	Treat	SLT recruited; recruitment for Secretariat in progress; induction and training programmes for staff in place; initial stages of Assistant Commissioner recruitment		Moderate	Remote	6	↔	8	1. Future stages of recruitment of Assistant Commissioners

Strategic Risk Register: 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies															
1	2	3	4	5,6,7 - Inherent Risk			8	9	10	11,12,13 - Residual Risk			14	15	16
Risk ID	Title	Description / Indicators	Owner	Impact	Likelihood	Severity level	Response	Controls	Mitigation status	Impact	Likelihood	Severity level	Risk trend and status	Appetite	Actions required
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4	Financial, physical and data resource	Inadequate budget, physical accommodation or information management leads to inability to deliver review to quality and timescale required	WT	Significant	Possible	12	Treat	1. Initial budget against project plan; 2. monthly review and reconciliation meetings with CO finance; 3. scrutiny of spend requirements to ensure value for money; 4. forward planning of accommodation needs and clear advance communication of those to CO; 5. clear information management policies		Moderate	Possible	9	↔	5	1. Assess impact of lower settlement from Spending Review; 2. Reflect Covid working arrangements depending on wider (inc. national) restrictions.
5	Technology	Hardware and/or software (particularly GIS and consultation website) unfit for purpose, leading to significant delay to the timetable and/or reputational damage	TBe	Severe	Possible	16	Treat	1. Contract awarded for GIS 2. Specification for consultation website formulated 3. Upgrade to corporate website in progress 4. Initial discussions with communication and printing providers.		Significant	Possible	12	↔	12	1. Implement GIS solution and trainig for staff 2. Issue tender for consultation website 3. Formulate clear and detailed supply and maintenance contracts with suppliers;
6	Reputation	Inappropriate conduct and/or errors in published material leads to lack of public confidence in BCE competence and/or independence	TBo	Significant	Possible	12	Treat	1. Clear communication of expectations and policies on public service propriety;		Significant	Negligible	4	↔	4	1. develop and adhere to clear communications strategy and plan; 2. develop and apply rigorous quality assurance procedures for internal procedures and publications 3. robust verification of electorate data across England

RISK SEVERITY LEVEL MATRIX						
See Likelihood and Impact Definitions on Risk Assessment tab						
IMPACT	Severe	5	10	16	20	25
	Significant	4	8	12	18	20
	Moderate	3	6	9	12	16
	Minor	2	4	6	8	10
	Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5
		Negligible	Remote	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
LIKELIHOOD						

Risk Severity	Green	Amber	Red
	Rating 1-5	Rating 5-10	Rating 12-25
Likelihood x impact. Enables a judgement on the degree of action necessary to manage individual risks and escalation points.	Risk is being managed within acceptable levels	Risk should be monitored closely by the Group Head to ensure the mitigating actions contain the risk .	Urgent action is needed to reduce the risk to a manageable level. Operating Committee should be made aware.

RISK STATUS					
	Green	A/G	A/R	Red	Blue
Status of mitigating action to manage risk	All mitigation actions are underway and are on schedule to be completed.	Some but not all of the mitigation actions are underway. No issues or problems reported which may affect delivery.	There are some issues or problems with completing this action, but there is mitigating action in place to bring delivery back on track.	Not yet begun or there are critical issues or problems which are impacting delivery of this action.	Action completed. The risk and mitigations no longer need to be managed. Risk and actions closed.

Risk trend	
Reducing (R)	
Increasing (I)	
Static (S)	
New (N)	

Risk Appetite

Risk Appetite - 'The amount of risk which an organisation is prepared to be exposed to at a point in time.'

To enable CO Groups and divisions to judge whether their risk exposure is acceptable, they need to consider the CO's risk appetite. Risk owners can use this to assess whether their current exposure is reasonable, or needs attention – e.g. is 'green' or 'amber/green' acceptable.

LIKELIHOOD			IMPACT			
Level	Likelihood	Expected or actual frequency of the risk materialising	Impact	Financial	Operational	Reputational
1	Negligible	May only occur in exceptional circumstances; simple process or project; no previous incidence of non compliance	Insignificant	Minimal impact from a financial perspective eg cost < £50,000 Project costs unlikely to be affected or within contingency;	Little impact; resolution achieved in business as usual management Project can be maintained on target through standard project management; no effect on benefit realisation	Non headline exposure; not at fault; no impact. Event that will lead to public criticism by external stakeholders as anticipated
2	Remote	Could occur at some time; less than 25% chance of occurring; non complex process or project &/or existence of checks and balances	Minor	Minor impact from a financial perspective eg cost < £250,000 Project costs likely to increase by up to 10% above contingency	Issues minor but noticeable; inconvenient delays; negative effect on two or more corporate objectives; Project may need to be escalated; up to 10% benefits not realised	Non headline exposure; clear fault settled quickly; negligible impact. Event that may lead to widespread public criticism.
3	Possible	Might occur at some time; 25-50% chance of occurring; previous audits/reports indicate non compliance; complex process or project with extensive checks and balances; impacting factors outside the control of Buying Solutions	Moderate	Substantial impact from a financial perspective eg cost between £0.25m and £1m Project costs likely to increase by up to 20% above contingency	Material delays or objective under achievement that without careful management would adversely impact operational performance Project under threat requiring focused mgt action; up to 20% benefits not realised	Repeated non headline exposure; slow resolution; Ministerial enquiry/briefing. Event that will undermine public trust or a key relationship for a short period.
4	Likely	Will probably occur in most circumstances; 50-75% chance of occurring; complex process or project with some checks and balances; impacting factors outside the control of Buying Solutions	Significant	Serious impact from a financial perspective eg cost between £1.0m and £2m Project costs likely to increase by up to 30% above contingency	Significant delays; performance significantly under target; failure of key strategic project or programme Project may need to be de-scoped and revised; impact on corporate objectives;	Headline profile; repeated exposure; at fault or unresolved complexities; ministerial involvement or regulatory breach Confidence of key project stakeholders undermined. Event that will destroy public confidence or a key relationship for a sustained period or at a critical moment.
5	Almost Certain	Can be expected to occur in most circumstances; more than 75% chance of occurring; complex process or project with minimal checks and balances; impacting factors outside the control of Buying Solutions	Severe	Serious threat to the viability of Cabinet Office eg cost > £2m Project costs likely to increase by more than 30% above contingency	Non achievement of corporate objectives/outcome performance failure Project failure - stopped; BS objectives adversely impacted	Maximum high level headline exposure; Ministerial or regulatory censure; loss of credibility Relationship with key project stakeholders significantly damaged. Event that will destroy public confidence or a key relationship.

Programme management - BCE 2023 Review Highlight Report

December 2020

Achieved / delivered (Good news/highlights)	Risks / issues (Including mitigation)	Forward look (Activity over the period, update on whether on track in the immediate/long term and status of significant milestones)
Electorate data and technology		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Final verification of electorate data for 2023 Review · ONS confirmed 5 January 2021 publication date of electorate data · Geographic Information System in development stage – delivery due before end of 2020 · Preliminary scope of specifications for consultation website · Specification developed to update corporate website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensuring accuracy of electorate data received for prospective ward boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Publication of electorate data – 5 January 2021 · Provision of sub-ward level mapping i.e. polling districts · Issue tender for consultation website provider · Official UK Commissions launch of 2023 Review · Formulating initial proposals · Agree policies for 2023 Review
Communications and Stakeholder Management		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Met with political parties · Parliamentary Constituencies Bill completed its passage in Parliament · Met with various organisations to investigate virtual public hearings · Annual UK Commission meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Must stay in control of the message – risk of bad impression given/reputation damaged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Formulate communications and advertising strategy · Procure/enter into contracts with Government printer, creative agency and advertising agency
Human and Corporate Resource		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Review Manager and five Review Officers started in post · Offered post to a Business Assistant · Induction and onboarding arrangements in place for new staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Issue – consideration of training requirements for new staff and how this will be delivered remotely · Issue – spending review settlement less than planned budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Active recruitment for Assistant Commissioners · Secure permanent accommodation for the Commission for duration of 2023 Review · Formulate plan for safe office working during Covid-19 restrictions · Recruitment of communications manager

Policies for the 2023 Review

Provisional policies

1. Commissioners previously agreed their provisional position on various policies for the detail of how the 2023 Review would be conducted, within the parameters established by legislation. These provisional positions are as set out in the table at Annex A.

Views of the political party representatives and matters for further consideration

2. On 26 November, Commissioners and senior staff met (online) with representatives of the political parties holding English seats in the House of Commons (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green) and Dr Julian Lewis MP (currently without a party whip). Two other MPs currently without a party whip were invited and sent papers, but did not attend.
3. As with previous such meetings prior to the formal commencement of a Review, the key purpose was to set out for parties the Commission's provisional policies for the Review, and gather feedback. The feedback from that meeting is set out below, grouped by the same themes under which the advance questions from the attendees were discussed at the 26 November meeting. Unless specifically mentioned below, the representatives at the meeting did not raise concerns at any of the provisional policies outlined in Annex A.
4. Commissioners are invited to consider the feedback received, and determine the extent to which any of the provisional policies need to be amended - and, if so, how - before finalising the Commission's positions, which will subsequently be published in the official 'Guide to the 2023 Review' (planned for spring 2021).

Timetabling

5. Parties were generally accepting of the Commission's proposed outline timetable for the Review, particularly welcoming the aim to consult on initial proposals in late spring/early summer 2021, rather than autumn, but requested a number of matters be considered, as follows:
 - a. Timing of secondary consultation - noted that some areas of England would be in the midst of local election campaigns, and the same party officials would likely be responsible for both campaign support and representing the

parties in public hearings. Therefore requested that either the whole secondary consultation be brought forward, or at least that public hearings in election areas should be scheduled earliest in the consultation period.

- b. Scheduling of lead public hearings - noted that some party representatives planned to cover Wales and Scotland hearings as well as all English regions, so requested that timetabling of 'lead' hearings be co-ordinated with those Commissions, to avoid overlap of dates.

Publication and distribution of data and materials

6. Parties generally supported the proposed approach, but made the following specific requests:
 - a. Technical liaison group - establish an official-level working group to facilitate the smoothest possible transmission of data and hard copy materials to the political party headquarters.
 - b. Early publication of material for secondary consultation - noted that some public hearings would most likely be starting at the beginning of the secondary consultation period, so publication of consultation material at the same time would give political parties no time to consider their responses. Request that initial consultation responses therefore be published 3-4 weeks before 'secondary consultation' on them commenced.
 - c. Availability of 'prospective ward' electorate data - noted that a number of local authorities with 'prospective' wards were likely to have delays in providing to BCE their electorate data on the basis of those new wards. Asked whether the Commission would release each local authority's updated data as soon as each was confirmed, rather than wait to publish all updates at once.

Use of English regions

7. There was strong support for the Commission's continued approach to working within each English region distinctly, with only the most exceptional reasons being needed to justify any proposal for a constituency to cross a region boundary. There was not felt to be a need to consult again on this approach.

Splitting of wards

8. There was a strong view that the Commission's previous and provisional policy was overly restrictive, with the following main points being made:
 - a. A reasoned basis for splitting a ward being 'if the statutory factors would be better met' (e.g. if it helped maintain alignment with local authority or existing constituency boundaries) might be a better criteria than the current formulation;
 - b. Splitting of wards resulted in practice in any event, due to new local government wards being implemented after new constituencies (built from old wards) were implemented;
 - c. There was a general preference for a ward to be split if it avoided otherwise having to combine wards from different local authorities in one constituency, or combining very urban with outlying rural wards.

Assistant Commissioners

9. There was general support for the Commission's proposed approach, including the reduction to two Assistant Commissioners per region (with some flexibility to work between regions).

Consultation and public hearings

10. Other than points already made (above), there was a request that speakers at public hearings be required to declare any political affiliation.

Other considerations

11. There was general support for the continuation of the Commission's previous policy to avoid creating constituencies with 'orphan wards' as far as possible.
12. No representative sought to promote the view that the Commission should seek to get each constituency 'as close as possible' to the electoral quota figure (the current policy is simply to propose and recommend constituencies that meet the statutory minimum and maximum electorate requirements).

Participation and engagement

13. There was general support for the Commission's continued good record of public engagement, utilising an online consultation portal supported by strong digital and social media advertising, whilst not neglecting more traditional channels.

Annex A - 2023 Review - provisional policies

Policy area	Provisional position
Regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the nine English regions ● Will consider constituency proposals that cross regions only in exceptional circumstances ● Distribute England constituency allocation to regions using the Sainte Lague distribution method
Ward splitting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wards are the main building blocks for formulating constituencies ● Splitting of wards will be considered in the event that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a) where all the possible 'whole ward' options in an area would significantly cut across local ties; or ○ b) where splitting a single ward may prevent a significant 'domino effect' of otherwise unnecessary change to a chain of constituencies in order to meet the electorate totals requirement. ● If a ward is to be split, then polling districts are the unit that will be used. ● Formulate a triage process for how representations suggesting ward splits will be considered.
Electoral quota/permitted range	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constituencies should be 'within the permitted range', rather than aiming for 'as close as possible' to the electoral quota
Existing constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Retain existing constituencies where possible
Adjacent wards and detached parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Constituencies should be contiguous wards ● Avoid orphan wards where possible
Constituency names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include a section in the Guide to the Review on naming - policy as per recent Reviews, regarding approach to existing constituency names, reflecting population centres if applicable, regard to names that carry local support, and approach to compass points.
Constituency designations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● General principle that constituencies that contain more than a small rural element be designated as county constituencies, and other cases designated as borough constituencies.
Public hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quantity and locations of public hearings to be agreed after consultation on initial proposals ● Hearings are two days in length

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers are encouraged to book a slot to speak • Chair of the hearing will control proceedings, including all questions going through the Chair • Main four political parties will be reserved a 30 minutes slot at each lead hearing to present their proposals for whole region • Exploring scope for increased 'remote' element to physical hearings (e.g. live streaming, possibly remote evidence and questions)
Assistant Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 Assistant Commissioners (two per each region, but also consider how Commissioners could work flexibly) • Chair public hearings, formulate revised proposals with the Secretariat
2018 Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognisant of the issues raised in previous reviews
Late representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear deadline for end of consultation periods, with late representations considered in exceptional circumstances - e.g. post markings.
Distribution of materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on digital communication methods. • Some hardcopy material will be distributed including to MPs, places of deposit and political parties.
Publication of representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All representations from each consultation period will be published • Publication of names and address details to be considered in context of GDPR • Reflect approach in privacy policy
Timetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation initial proposals - June to August 2021 • Secondary consultation - March to April 2022 • Consultation on revised proposals - September to October 2022 • Final recommendations - June 2023

BCE/2020/3rd meeting/Paper 3

Assistant Commissioner recruitment

Issue

1. The paper contains the proposals outlining the recruitment process of the Assistant Commissioners (ACs), including the overall numbers, remuneration, and their roles. Ahead of the start of the process, the secretariat is required to submit a request to Ministers to begin the recruitment process: Commissioners are therefore asked to agree the proposals in this paper, so the secretariat can progress AC recruitment.

Recommendation

2. We recommend that you:
 - a. confirm the number of ACs to be recruited as 18;
 - b. approve the proposed daily fee rate of £350; and
 - c. approve the recruitment mechanism proposed by the secretariat.

Timings

3. ACs are not likely to be appointed in post until summer 2021, however, from previous experience it is good practice to start this recruitment campaign in good time. We recommend that vacancies are advertised by early February 2021 to ensure that the appointments are approved by the relevant (Minister for the Cabinet Office) before the parliamentary recess in July. This will then allow the secretariat to prepare for the ACs induction, including bringing them up to speed on their regions.

Background and Consideration

4. Schedule 1 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 provides that the Secretary of State may “at the request of the Commission, appoint one or more assistant Commissioners to assist the Commission in the discharge of their functions.” The legislation contains no more specific information on the duties of an AC.
5. Previously, the Commission has appointed ACs to support its work, specifically to chair the public hearings and work with the staff review teams in formulating the revised proposals for each region. Commissioners have previously agreed to appoint ACs to support them in their work in a similar manner during the 2023 Review.
6. As happened at the 2018 Review, ACs will be expected to continue to bring an independent and analytical view to the process, free of any previous involvement in developing the initial proposals. As previously, in addition to their own attendance at public hearings, ACs will be provided by Review staff with collated representations from the initial and secondary consultation periods for the relevant region, with a cover paper highlighting the key themes and evidence from that material. As at the 2018 Review, ACs will be expected to work with the Review team in considering and analysing the strength of the competing views of the proposals, and reaching overall conclusions on what revisions should be recommended to the Commission. The secretariat will write up the overall report to Commissioners recommending any revisions to the initial proposals, and the reasoning behind those.

Number of Assistant Commissioners

7. At the 2018 Review, there were 21 ACs in total: three appointed to each of the three largest regions by electorate (London, North West and South East), and two appointed to each of the remaining six regions in England. In each region one AC was designated the 'Lead' AC for that region.
8. However, the practical experience of the work in the 2018 Review demonstrated that it was perfectly feasible for two ACs to deal with even the large regions, so Commissioners have previously provisionally indicated a shift to only appointing two for each region. change in working practice of ACs did not perhaps justify having as many as three ACs appointed to any region. In order to build in some contingency, however, we recommend that the 'non-Lead' AC in the smaller / less complex regions be briefed also on a larger / more complex region, in order that they may step in to support the work on that region if necessary.
9. **We therefore seek formal approval of a reduction in the total number of ACs to be appointed for the 2023 Review, from 21 down to 18 (with two ACs appointed to each region).**

Fees

10. The fee for ACs is, by statute, set by the Secretary of State with the approval of HM Treasury. It had historically been the same rate paid to Commissioners, which is broadly tied to the rates for fee-paid Judiciary. This is currently £505.50 per day. However, in 2018 we reviewed the nature of the role of the ACs in comparison to that of the Commissioners, together with the variation in the role ACs were asked to undertake, and it was agreed to decrease the fees paid to ACs from £505.50 to £350 per day. This decrease not only took into account the differences, but also the increasing emphasis on public sector efficiency savings which the Commission is committed to adhering to.
11. The secretariat has researched the approach of the other Parliamentary Boundary Commissions on fees. Neither the Boundary Commission for Scotland nor the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland have ACs as such, but are able to use members of the judiciary instead to chair the public hearings (they play no subsequent role in the analysis of consultation responses or recommending revisions to Commissioners): as salaried judges, these individuals are not paid for chairing the hearings for the Commissions. The Boundary Commission for Wales intends to pay their ACs the same rate as Commissioners, on the grounds of needing to attract high-quality dual-language candidates from a much smaller pool than in England. We do not have similar language constraints, and the secretariat is confident it will still attract a high-quality field of candidates: we note particularly that a reduction in the daily rate did not diminish the pool of candidates who applied for the 2018 Review, which in fact attracted a more diverse field of applicants than ever before. We have also sought the views of the Judicial Appointments Commission, this does not have ACs but pays its Commissioners a fee £338.33 per day.
12. **We therefore recommend that the daily rate of £350 per day should continue to be paid to ACs for the 2023 Review.**

Recruitment process

13. The recruitment will be conducted in line with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) Code of Practice (although Cabinet Office have specified that the selection of ACs is not an exercise that is required to be subject to OCPA regulation, as ACs are appointed to assist the Commission and do not form part of the Commission itself).
14. At the 2018 Review, the Secretariat ran all of the recruitment process, including the sifting of more than 701 applications. This was extremely resource heavy on the team. Given that we have less staff resource for the 2023 Review, we are therefore proposing to use the services of the Government Recruitment Service (GRS) to run the initial stages of the selection process (receipt of applications and initial sifting for interview). GRS has the necessary resource to manage the size of the administrative task, and are experienced in running the recruitment for some senior public appointment for the Cabinet Office and wider Civil Service.
15. **We propose for the vacancies to be advertised in late January/ early February 2021:**
 - a. published on the BCE website;
 - b. published on the Centre for Public Appointments's website;
 - c. adverts will be placed in national newspapers (tbc, but likely the Sunday Times/Times Online/Guardian etc), Counsel Magazine, the Law Society Gazette, the Lawyer, and the (local government) Municipal Journal, Local Government Chronicle, and on the local government jobs website. We will also be actively seeking to advertise the vacancies as widely but cost-effectively as possible, particularly targeting under-represented and hard-to-reach groups (see annex C). **We welcome the views of Commissioners on where else the advertisement could be published.**
16. We propose for the staff at GRS to conduct the initial sift of candidates to invite for interview, following benchmarking guidance from the secretariat, on the the basis of assessing relative strength against the published assessment criteria (annex A). A key part of ensuring effective sifting at this initial stage will be close working between GRS and the secretariat, to establish a clear benchmark at the outset, and clarity on how the sift should be conducted. **We would be grateful for the views of Commissioners on this approach and the selection criteria set out in annex A.**
17. We have outlined in annex B a broad timeline for the recruitment process, including when interviews are likely to be conducted. For the 2018 Review, the interview panel was made up of a Commissioner (as chair), the Secretary, and an independent external person (previously from the Judicial Appointments Commission). **We propose for the interviews to be conducted in the same format again.** If content with this approach, we will contact the Judicial Appointments Commission and look to confirm an independent panel member in the New Year. After the conclusion of interviews, the secretariat will come back to the Commission with recommended appointments, before these are submitted to the Minister for the appointments to be formally made.

Next steps

18. Commissioners are asked to agree the proposals contained in this paper. The Secretariat will then progress the process accordingly, including working with the Cabinet Office sponsor team (who advise the Minister in whose name the appointments are made).

Annex A

Selection Criteria

Skills/experience required

Applicants will be assessed against the following competencies and specialist skills.

Essential criteria

- Integrity and independence of mind;
- Ability to explain procedures, and produce clear and succinct analyses and evidence-based recommendations, both orally and in writing;
 - Ability to inspire respect and confidence, and to maintain authority when challenged, particularly in a public hearing context;
 - Ability to treat everyone with respect and sensitivity whatever their background and to demonstrate patience, courtesy and tact when dealing with the general public;
- Ability to work accurately at speed and under pressure, quickly absorbing detail, and analysing large quantities of information objectively;
- Ability to work well as part of a team with the BCE's Secretariat and one or more other Assistant Commissioners.
- Ability to work flexibly as required

Desirable though not essential

- Experience of working in the constitutional field.

Examples of where these have been displayed in the context of working within a statutory and/or public framework will be particularly welcome.

Other behaviours and skills required, which may be tested at interview.

- a. Communication Skills: Good listening skills to demonstrate patience, courtesy and tact.
- b. Personal effectiveness: High level of expertise in your chosen area or profession
- c. Leadership and Team working: Ability to demonstrate leadership and managerial skills where appropriate, and to work effectively as part of a team.

Annex B

Draft proposed timeline for the appointment of Assistant Commissioners (ACs)

Activity	Timescale by (week commencing)
Stage 1 - Approvals	
Briefing for the Commissioners on the proposed strategy for the appointment of the Asst. Commissioners for sign off (including nos and interview panels)	7th December
Preparation of all paperwork to include, role description and job spec, advert copy, applicant information pack and application form. To attach to the submission for the Minister	7th December
Finalise submission for Minister with Cabinet Office, to seek formal approval for the appointment of the ACs and agree role, advert copy, applicant information pack and application form	14th December or 11 January
Approval from Ministers (Advert and information pack, application form sign off) (one or two weeks)	18 th January
Stage 2 – Advertising	
Start of the Campaign: Vacancies to appear on: HM Government Public Appointments website, BCE website, Sunday papers (inc online), specialist legal and local government publications,, LinkedIn, minority and disability online forums	25th January or 1st February
Government Recruitment Service (GRS) - Page opens for receiving the application forms (All application forms will be submitted to the GRS page on behalf of BCE)	25th January or 1st February
Deadline for applications (4 Weeks)	Midnight 23rd or 28th February
Stage 3 – Sifting process (shortlist for interview)	
Establish clear criteria and benchmarking process with GRS	TBC, but before substantive sift process begins.
Sifting conducted by GRS, according to BCE criteria (two weeks depending on the no of applications received)	8th or 15th March

List of candidates shortlisted for interview sent to BCE, including short information on candidates' experience and diversity. General statistical data on diversity of all applicants also provided by GRS.	22nd or 29th March
Stage 4 – Panel interviews shortlisted candidates	
Panel sit for Interviews – 5 to 10 days (two weeks depending on the numbers shortlisted) – Proposed Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner, chair of the panel • Secretary to the Commission • Independent external panelist (probably from the Judicial Appointments Commission) 	5th or 12 th April completed by 19 th or 26 th April
Stage 5 – Post interview (appointed candidates)	
Decisions by BCE Commissioners on the list of appointable candidates via correspondence.	10th May to return by 14th May
Submission to Minister with formal recommendations for appointment, including panel's report with the unranked list of the candidates.	Before summer recess: June - July
Inform successful candidates	w/c 2nd August
Appointment to commence to be followed by induction	6th or 27th September

Annex C

Advertising AC vacancies

	Publication	Online/print
1	Sunday Times	Online
2	Sunday Times	Print
3	Guardian Jobs	Online
4	Telegraph	Online
5	Independent	Online
6	The Lawyer	Online
7	LG jobs	Online
8	LGC	Online
9	LocalGov Jobs (inc MJ)	Online
10	The Voice	Online
11	LinkedIn	Online
12	Evenbreak	Online
13	Law Society Gazette	Online
14	HM Government Public Appointments	Online