

Minutes of the sixth meeting of 2021 of the Boundary Commission for England, held on 22 November 2021

Mr Justice Lane (Deputy Chair)
Colin Byrne (Commissioner)
Sarah Hamilton (Commissioner)
Tim Bowden (Secretary to the Commission)
Deputy Secretary to the Commission
Head of Corporate Services
Communications Manager
Business Support Officer

1. Welcome and minutes of the last meeting

- 1.1 Commissioners agreed the minutes of 14 September 2021 meeting, subject to changes for accuracy and grammatical purposes.

2. Paper 1: Review Programme Update

- 2.1 Mr Bowden noted the updates made to the timetable.
- 2.2 Mr Bowden noted the updates made to the risk register, which now includes COVID-19 as a separate specific risk, particularly given the likely timetable for Public Hearings.
- 2.3 Mr Bowden noted the Machinery of Government (MOG) changes, the Secretariat will officially move to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in early December.
- 2.4 Mr Bowden noted that the current plan includes the Commission remaining at its current accommodation of 35 Great Smith Street. Members of the Secretariat will also retain separate Boundary Commission for England email addresses.
- 2.5 Mr Bowden noted that the Secretariat continues to follow Cabinet Office policy in regards to Covid-19 guidelines and hybrid working.

3. Paper 2: Secondary Consultation Preparations

- 3.1 The Deputy Secretary noted the ongoing work by the Review Team in preparation to publish responses from the Initial Consultation.
- 3.2 Commissioners agreed to publish the responses two weeks before the launch date of the Secondary Consultation.

4. Paper 3: Public Hearings Update

- 4.1 The Head of Corporate Services presented the Paper and provided Commissioners with an update on Public Hearings.
- 4.1 Based on legal advice received, Commissioners agreed not to hold hybrid public hearings.
- 4.2 Commissioners agreed to increase the number of Public Hearing from thirty to thirty-two.
- 4.3 Commissioners agreed to publish a consolidated video recording of the hearing after the hearing had been concluded. Commissioners proposed the recording should be made available as soon as possible after the hearing has ended.. Commissioners agreed on this approach instead of livestreaming the public hearings.
- 4.4 Mr Bowden outlined that guidance on public hearings would be circulated to Commissioners for agreement. Subsequently this guidance would be published.

5. Paper 4: Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1 The Head of Corporate Services presented the updated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to the Commissioners.
- 5.2 Commissioners provided comments on the updated EIA. Commissioner Sarah Hamilton suggested that when the consolidated video recordings of Public Hearings are published online, these should include captions. The Secretariat will investigate this.

6. Communications Campaign Evaluation

- 6.1 The Communications Manager gave a presentation regarding the Communications campaign during the Initial Consultation.
- 6.2 Having reflected on the initial consultation, the Communications Manager gave recommendations for the communications campaign for the Secondary Consultation.
- 6.3 Commissioner Colin Byrne noted that radio advertising had not been used during the communications campaign. The Communications Manager noted that advertisements on the streaming service had replaced this. Mr Bowden noted the communications budget available for the 2023 Review was not sufficient to undertake radio advertising.
- 6.4 Commissioner Colin Byrne noted the significant effort which has been made to communicate the Commissions message during the initial consultation.

7. Any other business

- 7.1 Mr Bowden noted that the Commission is required to provide an update to the Speaker of the House of Commons in January 2022 on the progress of the 2023 Review. Mr Bowden will provide a draft to the Commissioners for their consideration.
- 7.2 Mr Bowden updated that it is expected that the annual meeting of the UK Boundary Commissions is likely to take place in January 2022.