

BCE/2011/Paper 10

BCE/2011/1st Meeting

## **BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

Minutes of the meeting held in the 2nd floor meeting room, Cabinet Office, 35 Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BQ on Monday 21 February 2011 at 9.30am.

### **Present:-**

The Hon. Mr Justice Sales	Deputy Chairman
Mr D Elvin QC	Commissioner
Mr N Pringle	“
Mr S D James	Secretary (Cabinet Office)
Mr T P Bellringer	“
Mr R W Farrance	“
Dr A Kikugawa	“
Ms C Batterbee	“
Mr G Reed	“
Mr G R Tessier	“

Apologies were received from Mr Sam Hartley, Secretariat (Cabinet Office)

The presence of the Assessors from Ordnance Survey and the Statistics Authority was not required at the meeting.

### **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER (BCE/2011/Paper1)**

1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved by the Commission without amendment and signed by the Deputy Chairman.

### **2. MATTERS ARISING SINCE 20 DECEMBER 2010 (BCE/2011/Paper 2)**

#### Electoral Registers and RPF29 forms

2.1 The Secretariat had received RPF29 forms from the Population Estimates Unit (PEU) of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for all of the 326 local authorities. Two authorities (Central Bedfordshire and West Somerset) have submitted their RPF29 forms with the ward data relating to the new ward boundaries that will come into effect on 5 May 2011. Gerald Tessier is in the process of re-basing the ward figures on the existing ward structure in these authorities.

2.2 It was considered that the receipt of the RPF29s had been more timely than in previous years and has been facilitated by meetings held between the Secretariat and ONS.

- 2.3 Members recalled that the Secretariat had been considering the issue of the names of some 16 year olds erroneously appearing on the register of Parliamentary electors. Since the last Commission meeting and the issue of a circular to EROs by Elections and Democracy Division (EDD) of the Cabinet Office on 13 December 2011, the electoral services departments in some local authorities contacted EDD to admit to some erroneous entries in their registers for 16 year olds. EDD reminded the authorities concerned of the legal position and that they would be expected to act accordingly.
- 2.4 The Secretariat had taken steps to ensure the figures to be used for the next review are as robust as possible, although the Commission made it very clear that it is not the role of the Commission to edit entries in a particular register. Analysis by Mr Tessier and his team had, by comparing the relevant RPF29 data returns provided to ONS and the registers supplied directly to the Commission, concluded that the total number of 16 year olds erroneously appearing on the register of Parliamentary electors across the whole of England must be less than 1,000. In the context of an overall electorate for England of over 38,000,000, this figure is highly unlikely to create any difficulties. In the same context, the Secretary had spoken to Alison Whitworth to ensure that ONS were aware of the potential issue as they conduct data checks on the figures submitted by local authorities prior to ONS’s publication of the electoral registers.
- 2.5 Mr Elvin agreed to send the Deputy Chairman the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act regarding the inclusion of “attainers”.

Staffing

- 2.6 The Secretariat had now reached a near complete staff complement, with the arrival of the majority of the Review Team members. Two further members of staff were due to commence shortly. Members were provided with a staff organogram and contact details.

The UK Electorate – Tabled Paper 1

- 2.7 Members noted that ONS was due to publish its monitor with the electorates for each part of the UK on 23 February 2011. The Secretariat had advance notice of the content of the monitor and was able to check the electoral data against its own records. Following the release of the data by ONS, as part of an announcement co-ordinated with the three other Boundary Commissions, the Commission will itself announce the agreed electorate for the UK (and with it the electorate for England), the division of the 600 seats between the four nations, and the UK Electoral Quota (UKEQ) that will be used when distributing constituencies. Members noted that the electorates for the UK were:

<b>Country</b>	<b>Electorate</b>
England	38,332,557*
Northern Ireland	1,190,635
Scotland	3,873,387#
Wales	2,281,596
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,678,175</b>

\*less the electorate of the Isle of Wight (110,924)

#less the electorate of Na h-Eileanan an Iar (21,837), and Orkney and Shetland (33,755) – two protected constituencies

2.8 This number of electors (45,678,175) which, when divided by 596 as required by the Act, produces a UKEQ, to the nearest whole number, of **76,641** for the next review. All constituencies in England, with the exception of the two protected constituencies for the Isle of Wight, must therefore have an electorate that is no smaller than **72,810** and no larger than **80,473** (within 5% of the UKEQ). The latest electorates suggest that 8% of the constituencies created in the “Scheme for England” were outside the 5% tolerance from the UKEQ.

2.9 The allocation of precisely 600 constituencies as required by the Act is achieved using the Sainte-Laguë method (excluding the four protected constituencies) as shown in the table below.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Allocation</b>	<b>Reduction</b>
England	38,332,557*	500(+2)	31
Northern Ireland	1,190,635	16	2
Scotland	3,873,387#	50(+2)	7
Wales	2,281,596	30	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>45,678,175</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>50</b>

\*less the electorate of the Isle of Wight

#less the electorates of the two protected constituencies

### **The number of constituencies to be allocated to each of the English electoral regions**

2.10 The electorates of the nine electoral regions, when divided by the UKEQ, produce the theoretical entitlement to constituencies set out below. It was noted that by rounding the allocation to each region either up or down at the 0.5 mark, the total number of constituencies that would be allocated is **502**, instead of the **500** that is required.

<b>Region</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Exact TE</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Eastern	4,280,707	55.85	56
East Midlands	3,361,089	43.85	44
London	5,266,904	68.72	69
North East	1,971,249	25.72	26
North West	5,253,019	68.54	69
South East	6,192,504*	80.80	81
South West	4,042,475	52.74	53
West Midlands	4,115,668	53.70	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	3,848,942	50.22	50
England	38,332,557	500.15	<b>502</b>

\*less the electorate of the Isle of Wight

2.11 Given that the process of simply rounding up or down the theoretical entitlements to constituencies for each region at the 0.5 point would not produce the precise allocation of 500 constituencies (excluding the two Isle of Wight constituencies), the application of the Sainte-Laguë method produced a fairer approach which corresponded with the

approach taken by Parliament for the allocation of constituencies throughout the UK. The effect of applying the Sainte-Laguë method is shown in the following table:

<b>Region</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Exact TE</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Eastern	4,280,707	55.85	56
East Midlands	3,361,089	43.85	44
London	5,266,904	<b>68.72</b>	<b>68</b>
North East	1,971,246	25.72	26
North West	5,253,019	<b>68.54</b>	<b>68</b>
South East	6,192,504*	80.80	81
South West	4,042,475	52.75	53
West Midlands	4,115,668	53.70	54
Yorkshire and the Humber	3,848,942	50.22	50
England	38,332,557	500.15	500

\*less the electorate of the Isle of Wight

- 2.12 Members noted that as the Sainte-Laguë calculator does not allocate London its rounded-up theoretical entitlement, on average, every constituency in London will be required to be 811 electors above the UKEQ. The application of the Sainte-Laguë calculator to the North West region and the consequent rounding down of the allocation of constituencies to 68 will require alterations to be made to the way the counties in the North West region are grouped.

#### Communications

- 2.13 The Commission's website, currently hosted by MoJ's IT platform, is to be migrated to the Cabinet Office by 31 March 2011. Until then, the MoJ IT team will continue to make any changes necessary to the website. The Secretariat had been working with the Cabinet Office on a design and specification for a new website, which it expects to be live early in the financial year 2011/12. Cabinet Office Communications Unit staff have indicated that they are confident that the new website will allow visitors to view all representations received during the consultation periods, and for users to submit views through the website using an online form.
- 2.14 There had previously been concern that the perception of the Commission's independence might have been compromised by having to use an URL (Uniform Resource Locator) containing either 'cabinet-office', or the suffix '.gov.uk'. The Commission's current URL is [www.boundarycommission.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommission.org.uk), maintaining the perception of its independence. A submission has been put to the Minister for the Cabinet Office via EDD, requesting the retention of the '.org.uk' suffix for the BCE's website and the absence of "cabinet-office" from the URL.

#### Newsletter No.1/2011

- 2.15 The Newsletter was issued on 27 January 2011. It had originally been intended to issue it on 12 January but it was held back so that it could be updated to take account of the Bill's expected progress through its Committee stage in the House of Lords. However, given the difficulties that the Bill was encountering in the Lords at that time, it was decided that the content relating to the Bill's progress should be reduced.

Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Ordnance Survey (OS)

- 2.16 Mr James and Mr Farrance met with officials from OS on 18 January 2011 to discuss the content of a draft SLA for the mapping the Commission will require for its provisional and revised recommendations, which will be supplied to the places of deposit during the review. The meeting was very productive and an updated draft of the SLA, which reflected the discussions, was received from OS the following day. This was checked and comments returned to OS. The final draft has been received from OS and it is now awaiting approval by the Secretary. It is intended that the agreed SLA should be signed by 31 March 2011.

A future Geographic Information System (GIS) solution

- 2.17 At the request of Mr Farrance, Cliff Wilkinson of ESRI(UK), who currently provide technical support to the Commission's GIS, supplied the first draft of a report outlining a possible GIS solution for the future. The solution would enable the Commission to take advantage of a new digital data map set that will become available later this year. This would enable the Commission to create "electoral" units below ward level in any area where it is considered necessary to achieve an electoral parity target of 5% (or less).
- 2.18 The Secretariat considered the draft report and a number of corrections and suggestions were forwarded to ESRI(UK). Mr Farrance met with Mr Wilkinson on 18 February to discuss the Secretariat's thoughts on the report. Members were informed that, at this stage, the report is being provided by ESRI(UK) as one of the services it provides to its customers as a way of demonstrating what it may be possible to achieve at a future review (not for the 2013 review). Mr Farrance also confirmed that the report is not a document that is intended in any way to be considered the start of a formal procurement process for a new GI solution from ESRI(UK). It was solely to demonstrate what type of GI solution would be available in the future from GI software providers.
- 2.19 Mr Farrance and Mr Tessier also met with the ESRI(UK) consultants to discuss matters relating to the loading of the 2011 electoral data. It was confirmed that the data would be loaded onto the GIS on either 23 or 24 March 2011, a week earlier than previously expected.

**3. PARLIAMENTARY VOTING SYSTEM & CONSTITUENCIES ACT 2011 – UPDATE (BCE/2011/Paper 3)**

- 3.1 Members considered a paper prepared by Mr Bellringer which showed the changes that had been made to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. They noted that, despite the lengthy and contentious passage of the PVS&C Bill through Parliament, relatively few substantive amendments were actually made to the final form of the Act. The key differences from the draft Bill that Members had already considered are:
- a. that reviews are to be conducted before 1 October of every fifth year;
  - b. that a four-week period for 'counter-representations' would be added into the statutory requirement of a twelve week consultation period;

- c. the Commission will be required to conduct “public hearings” during the period between the fifth and tenth weeks of the consultation period. There will be no fewer than two per region and no more than five;
- d. there will be an eight week statutory consultation period for any revised recommendations the Commission may make. There is no provision for a further consultation period after this stage;
- e. the definition of the local government boundaries that the Commission may have regard to has been extended to include the electoral divisions of county councils;
- f. the Isle of Wight will be allocated two whole constituencies in the future (under the heading of “Protected constituencies” in the Act);
- g. the addition of “boundaries of existing constituencies” to the factors a Boundary Commission “may take into account”; and
- h. provision that where there is a tie for who should receive a constituency under the Sainte-Laguë allocation between the nations of the UK, that constituency should be allocated to that nation involved in the tie that has the smallest actual electorate.

3.2 An amendment to increase the permissible tolerance from the UKEQ of up to 7.5% was not carried.

3.3 Members noted that, although they may have regard to the county council electoral divisions, no electoral statistics for these were available. They also considered that the requirement to have regard to existing constituency boundaries would be an important consideration for inclusion in the Information Booklet and noted that the modelling conducted by the Secretariat had already taken account of such a requirement.

3.4 The conduct of the public hearings would require arrangements for them to be made a considerable time in advance – before representations had been received and it was possible to identify the main areas of objection. Members considered that, however many it was decided should be held, the hearing would have to cover the whole region, although there would be the expectation of a local focus depending on where the hearing was held. The aim would be to complete all the public hearings for each region within a two week period. This would have to be explicit in any communication the Commission issued. The Act required that “qualifying parties” must be heard and also allowed for the questioning of witnesses.

3.5 Members considered that it would be desirable for people wishing to attend to be registered in advance and allocated a specific time. Those who did not pre-register would be heard at the end of the day, if time allowed. This would require that the length of the day be fixed across all the regions to ensure that everyone had the same opportunity to speak. Whilst further consideration of the detail of arrangements for public hearings would follow, Members provisionally concluded that a “day” should be taken as running from 9.30am until 5.00pm, with an hour for lunch, although this was not inflexible. Members considered that the Chair should be given some

discretion and the power to extend a hearing by up to approximately an hour if it was thought necessary (for example if there were travel delays due to bad weather) and asked the Secretariat to investigate alternative arrangements such as the possibility of holding hearings in the afternoons and evenings rather than during the working day. That discretion should be wide enough to allow the hearing to be fairly conducted but still completed within the statutory limit.

- 3.6 Members considered that a statement should be read out at the start of the hearing to explain the Commission's position and the conduct of the hearing. They also considered that they should give further guidance to the Parliamentary political parties (PPPs) who should be asked to provide in writing in advance the gist of what they wished to say. There was also scope for producing guidance aimed at the general expectations of the procedure and managing the hearing time fairly. It might also consider discouraging the repetition of representations not only within a single hearing but also within the general group of hearings within the particular region – the purpose of such hearings is both to inform the public and to allow representations to be received. The latter needed only to be done once.
- 3.7 The introduction of public hearings into the process and the short timescale in which they were to be conducted would have staff resource issues for the Secretariat. It was expected that at each hearing there would be a combination of a senior manager from the Secretariat, the appropriate region Team Manager and a review Team Officer, as well as two Event Facilitators providing administrative support. The Secretary confirmed that he was in the process of making a submission for a supplementary bid for funding to recruit temporary staff to undertake administrative support and “back-office” functions. It was also expected that a Public Hearing Coordinator would be appointed who would ensure consistency in the arrangements for the hearings, including the booking of accommodation for the hearings and arranging the schedule of speakers, as well as the recruitment and training of the Event Facilitators. The “back-office” support staff would carry out administrative tasks such as the scanning and redacting of representations whilst Secretariat staff were out of the office engaged in hearings. The task of analysing the representations would still fall to the permanent members of the Secretariat. Members confirmed that they were broadly content with the staffing model as tabled at the meeting.
- 3.8 Members discussed the skills and qualities that would be required of a hearing Chair; these considerations were discussed under Paper 8, the selection and role of ACs. However, it was clear from the limited timescale for hearings that the ability of ACs to manage hearings effectively would be important.

#### **4. PROGRAMME UPDATE (BCE/2011/Paper 4)**

- 4.1 Dr Kikugawa introduced the programme update to the Commission which will, at future meetings, comprise a highlight report giving a brief update on the current position of the project, the risk register and overall project plan. Members agreed that the highlight report need not be circulated prior to the meeting with the other meeting papers, but instead provided on the day of the meeting.

- 4.2 The risk register and the overall project plan will be circulated prior to the meeting with the other meeting papers. Members noted the risk register highlighted the top ten risks as at 4<sup>th</sup> February 2011.
- 4.3 Dr Kikugawa confirmed that the critical path of the original plan allowed for 26 weeks at the end of the review process in which to write the final report. However, the introduction of public hearings and the need to procure a transcription service reduced this to 14 weeks, although it was considered that this was still a comfortable amount of time within the statutory timetable.
- 4.4 The key risk was the uncertainty about the number of representations that would be received and the implications that a very large number of representations might have on the review. It was considered that the GIS was robust, but that extra GIS machines might need to be acquired to analyse representations if their number were very large: an SLA with Fujitsu for the GIS (hardware and non-GIS softwares) was being sought as a consequence. The need to procure a transcription service was considered by Members to be an additional risk, as was the advance management and handling of the hearings, and they asked that these also be added to the risk register. Members noted that some of the risks that had been identified had now been rendered obsolete as a result of changes to the legislation.

## **5. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (BCE/2011/Paper 5)**

- 5.1 Colette Batterbee introduced this paper which articulated a communications strategy and made a number of specific recommendations for Members' consideration. Members agreed with the Secretariat that a key element was that all messages should be brief, whatever the client audience, and that they had been given a job to do by Parliament (not the government) to ensure that the rules were applied in a fair and transparent manner.
- 5.2 Members recalled that they had previously considered that large, full-page public notices should be taken out in the national daily and Sunday press. They considered that it would still be desirable to publish notices in the national press, largely in order to insure against potential criticism of not having publicised the Commission's work widely enough. However, they modified their original decision and considered that the public notices should be far less textual in nature and that their purpose should be to point the public in the direction of where they would be able to access further information, such as the website and a phone number. It was considered that quarter page notices might be sufficient.
- 5.3 With regard to the news releases that would be supplied to the media, Members agreed that it was important that they were more succinct and that the Commission should be more proactive in order that editors could be encouraged, as far as was possible, to run with the Commission's story.
- 5.4 Members were content with the communications strategy and its key recommendations and agreed its adoption.



**6. NEWSLETTER No.2/2011 (BCE/2011/Paper 6)**

6.1 Two Newsletters (No.2/2011 and No.3/2011) had been scheduled for issue on 3 February 2011 and 4 March 2011 respectively. However, Members decided that, as Newsletter No.1/2011 had been delayed, Nos.2 and 3 should be merged into one document to be issued on 4 March 2011. The merged Newsletter would cover:-

- a) The new statutory framework for constituency reviews established by the PVS&C Act 2011;
- b) availability of 2011 electorate data;
- c) applicability of local government boundaries;
- d) use of local government district wards as the building blocks for constituencies;
- e) use of the electoral regions for the initial allocation of constituencies across England;
- f) publication and distribution of the information booklet; and
- g) meeting with the Parliamentary political parties.

6.2 Members noted that the Act gave a much stronger steer than the original form of the Bill for the review to be conducted using the English regions (the requirement to hold public hearings a regional basis) and considered that this message should be reinforced in the Newsletter, although they considered that it would still be desirable to seek the views of the public on their proposals to use the regions for their initial allocation of constituencies. They also considered that the Newsletter should provide more explanation of, and why they were using, the Sainte-Laguë method to allocate constituencies, and asked that it reflect that the Act required the Commission to have regard to the current constituency boundaries and that no current constituency crossed a regional boundary. However, they considered that there should be a free-standing paragraph in which it was made clear that, even though an existing constituency might have an electorate that was very close to the UKEQ, it did not necessarily mean that the constituency would be unaltered. It was important that this message was explicit in all the communications issued by the Commission in order to deal with possible expectations regarding those constituencies which might be close to the UKEQ and which, viewed in isolation, might be seen as not requiring significant amendment.

6.3 Members asked that they should see the draft again in view of changes that they had requested be made. The Secretariat confirmed that the text of the Newsletter would feed into the production of a more succinct news release to the media.

6.4 The Secretariat noted that the Boundary Commission for Scotland would issue news releases and press notices under embargoes. This would entail Scottish MPs being given copies on the day before their release. Members decided upon the adoption of a similar system in England to allow MPs a fair opportunity to consider the proposals if they were asked for comments by the media.

**7. DRAFT INFORMATION BOOKLET (BCE/2011/Paper 7)**

- 7.1 Members noted the draft Information Booklet. However, due to the changes that were made to the PVS&C Bill after the draft was prepared, they decided to defer their consideration of the booklet until those changes had been incorporated into the draft. The Secretariat confirmed the drafting would be targeted at those making a representation or wishing to attend a hearing.
- 7.2 It was agreed that the Secretariat would send a revised draft of the Information Booklet to Members for their consideration ahead of the next Commission meeting.

**8. ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS – THEIR SELECTION AND ROLE (BCE/2011/Paper 8)**

- 8.1 Members considered a number of issues relating to the appointment of ACs at the Commission meetings on 19 October and 20 December 2010. They concluded that the precise nature of the relationship between the Secretariat analysers, the ACs and Members was very important and that this relationship should be more clearly specified and brought back to a future Commission meeting for further consideration. Members also made a number of comments on the draft job specification for ACs.
- 8.2 Whilst the role of AC has traditionally been filled by legal professionals (usually barristers – mainly QCs – but also some solicitors) it was not clear why professional legal qualifications and experience should be an essential criterion for appointment as an AC, as opposed to a desirable one. Members therefore decided that they should widen the eligibility for ACs as they considered that highly developed analytical skills, the ability to produce well-written, balanced reports and (if they chaired the public hearings) the ability to conduct a public meeting effectively were qualities that candidates from a range of backgrounds (not just the Bar) might have. Mr Elvin suggested that Planning Inspectors (especially the more senior) would be likely to have the necessary skills. The extension of the potential pool might also assist in addressing issues of diversity. It was understood that the Judicial Appointments Commission was extending the pool of those traditionally appointed to posts.
- 8.3 With regard to the hearings, Members considered that the main qualities required of a Chair were an ability to control public hearings, manage time, to be an effective facilitator whilst making it clear that hearings were not a forum for discussion but for presentation of the Commission’s proposals and of representations by the public, and to be demonstrably neutral. The Secretary, whilst agreeing that these were the qualities and skills required, asked whether Members might wish to consider whether, for the hearings, there should be a cultural shift away from what might be perceived as being a legal process by the inclusion of suitable candidates from other backgrounds, for example, a well respected figure who was locally well-known.
- 8.4 Members considered that the skills required for chairing hearings were similar to those required for considering the representations. Although technically it appeared from the Act that the chairs did not have to be ACs, it was considered that it would be desirable for them to be so, particularly so that the public at the hearings could feel that they were in a position to address their representations to someone who was directly involved in the process of digesting those representations alongside written

representations for the purpose of informing the Commission about them. This would also enable the recruitment for both positions to be conducted in the same exercise.

- 8.5 Members considered how many ACs should be appointed for each region to chair the hearings and analyse the representations. They concluded that an appropriate model would be to recruit a “chief” or Lead AC for each of the nine English regions with up to three deputies. The lead AC would be the individual with responsibility for collating the analysis of the oral and written representations produced by the other ACs in that region and submitting one final report with recommendations to the Commission.

#### The selection process

- 8.6 Members asked the Secretariat to amend the draft job description for ACs further in order to cover both the chairing of the hearings and the analysis of the representations and writing of the report, as those applying would be expected to be able to perform both roles. It would be for the Commission to determine which of the successful candidates would chair individual hearings and co-ordinate the final report on the representations. There would be no need to produce two separate job specifications – the same one would suffice both for those expected to act as “Lead” ACs and those only as ACs since the relevant skill set required would be the same. The choice of who should be assigned to which specific AC role would be made by the Commission once the pool of ACs had been selected.
- 8.7 The Secretariat had given further thought to the various stages of the selection process and how and when they might be undertaken. A draft timetable showing the different stages was provided to Members, although this had now been superseded by events. The Secretariat agreed to amend the timetable and to resubmit to Members a revised package of “key recruitment policies” for their consideration. This package would include the job advert and details of the strategy for advert placement, the eligibility criteria, assessment criteria, a diversity strategy and associated proposals for monitoring, details of remuneration and T&Cs, the selection process and the information pack to be provided to candidates.
- 8.8 Members gave further consideration to whether there should be formal interviews for the position of AC. They concluded that it would be desirable for interviews to be carried out, particularly because some sense of candidates’ personal presence and air of authority would be relevant to a judgment about their abilities in relation to chairing public hearings. However, in view of the large number of candidates that would have to be interviewed in order to recruit a sufficiently large pool, the Members would not be in a position to undertake the interviews themselves due to the pressure of their other commitments. The Secretariat informed the Members that review and interviewing by professional interviewers by reference to an agreed skill set was common practice in the civil service and agreed to explore further the conduct of interviews without a Commission Member presence. The Members would make the final decision on the names of candidates that would be sent to the Secretary of State for appointment.
- 8.9 The Secretary also gave an undertaking to consider, in consultation with Members, the most appropriate journals or publications in which to advertise the position of AC.

### Analysis of the representations

- 8.10 Further to the discussion at the last meeting, Members had been provided with an Appendix which aimed to clarify the relationship between the Secretariat, the ACs and the Members. It shows the flow of information between each of the three groups involved in the process and describes who is responsible for considering what, and at what stage.
- 8.11 After consideration, Members concluded that it would not be necessary or practicable for any initial analysis of the representations provided by the Secretariat to be sent to Members for quality assurance before the analysis and the ACs' brief was sent to ACs. The first they would therefore see of the representations would be when they were returned to them with the AC's report and recommendations. However, Members considered it would be helpful for them if the Secretariat provided a short note of the key issues that they had identified as arising in the representations, particularly if there were any issues of principle or wider import. It was not considered that this should be a formal process or stage in the timetable – it was an area where the Secretariat could be expected to use their own judgment and common sense to give early warning to the Members of matters likely to be of particular significance as the process of consideration of representations and formulation of proposals goes forward. This would, for example, enable Members to identify a major issue on which they might wish to make a policy decision prior to the documents being sent to the AC or to give a steer to the ACs when drafting their reports.

## **9. MEETING WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY POLITICAL PARTIES (BCE/2011/Paper 9)**

- 9.1 Members agreed at the meeting of 8 February 2010 that the practice of meeting with the representatives of the PPPs should be continued for the forthcoming review.
- 9.2 The meetings had historically taken place after the commencement of the review had been announced: this always coincided with the publication of the electoral registers which will not be the case for the forthcoming review where the electoral registers to be used are set out in the Act. The Commission is scheduled to send the electoral statistics to the PPPs on 4 March 2011, at the same time as they are placed on the website. Holding a meeting on 4 April 2011 will enable the PPPs to consider the electorates and their potential impact ahead of the meeting. Also, the Commission is due to issue Newsletter No.2/2011 on 4 March 2011, which opens consultation on the use of the electoral regions. The outcome of that consultation will be known to Members shortly before the meeting with the political parties. Whilst it will not be possible to fully analyse the representations ahead of the meeting with the PPP, Members will have a feel for what the public reaction has been.
- 9.3 At the fifth general review, the PPPs were asked to confirm ahead of the meeting those aspects they wished to discuss: their responses were copied to the other parties ahead of the meeting. At the meeting, discussion of the issues submitted by the PPPs allowed the Commission to disclose the policies it intended to follow, as well as to explain how it would deal with some of the main statutory criteria. A free-flowing discussion ensued and at the end of the process the Commission was able to consider the set of policies it intended to follow at the review. Any tweaks to the policies it had

previously set were then carried through to the Information Booklet. The meeting also enabled the Commission to highlight those areas it considered the PPPs could have a positive impact on the review process.

- 9.4 The meeting for this review is expected to provide the Commission with an opportunity to explain its thoughts on the use of the electoral regions, the continued use of wards, the crossing of boundaries, public consultation etc. It will also be possible to explain what the Commission's communication strategy is and, hopefully, to persuade the PPPs how they can assist and ensure a successful review. e.g. in co-ordinating input from their local parties. Members agreed that the meetings should proceed on a basis that was transparent to all and that in writing to the PPPs the Secretariat should make it clear that it would expect to produce an agreed note of the meeting which would be publicly available.
- 9.5 Members confirmed that the meeting should take place on Monday 4 April 2011 and would be conducted in accordance with past practice. 4 April is also the date of the next meeting of the Commission. They asked the Secretary to send formal invitations to the PPPs (and the one Green Party representative) immediately after the meeting requesting a list of matters relating to the conduct of the review that they wish to discuss and the policies that the Commission may adopt. It will be confirmed that matters that relate directly to what will be contained in the provisional recommendations, such as which counties and London boroughs should be paired/grouped for the allocation of constituencies, will not be open to discussion at this meeting. Responses will be required by 18 March 2011 which will allow the Secretariat time to conduct an analysis of what has been said and provide a briefing paper to Members a few days before the meeting. Members also considered that a further meeting should be held to discuss matters arising from the requirement to hold Public Hearings.

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

### The name of the review

- 10.1 In order to reinforce the perception that the forthcoming review was different from previous reviews, Members decided that the forthcoming review should, henceforth, be referred to as the "2013 Review", and not as "the Sixth Review". They asked the Secretary to write to the other UK Commissions to suggest that the naming of the review be added to the agenda of the meeting to be held in Cardiff on 21 March 2011. The naming of the review would also be incorporated in the next newsletter.

### Notification of the start of the review

- 10.2 The Secretary confirmed that he would be writing separate letters to the PPPs, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Speaker on 22 February 2011.
- 10.3 Mr Farrance confirmed that every MP will receive each news release and newsletter so that they were fully informed of the progress of the review.

Date of the next meeting

- 10.4 The next meeting of the Commission would be held on Monday 4 April, the same day as the meeting with the PPPs, which commences at 10.30am. Members will therefore convene at 9.30am in order to consider the meeting with the PPPs that will follow. A full meeting of the Commission will follow after the meeting with the PPPs.