

AGENDA ITEM NO. 12

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

Mr A Bailey
Great Aycliffe Town Council
Council Offices
School Aycliffe Lane
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 6QF

20 MAY 2011

24 May 2011

Dear Mr Bailey,

**ELECTORAL REVIEW OF COUNTY DURHAM: FURTHER DRAFT
RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Commission has today published its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for Durham County Council. A summary of the Commission's report is enclosed. A copy of the draft recommendations report will follow shortly. The electoral arrangements for your town council will change as a result of our recommendations. A copy of the report can also be viewed on our website, at www.lgbce.org.uk.

I should stress that the Commission has not finalised its conclusions and, in light of further evidence may put forward final recommendations which differ from those set out in the further draft recommendations. We therefore encourage all those who have a view to write to us regardless of whether or not they agree with our further draft recommendations. It is very important that those who oppose our further draft recommendations should suggest alternatives which are supported by evidence. All representations received during the consultation period will be taken into account and the Commission will then consider whether or not to amend its further draft recommendations.

The Commission would welcome comments on its report by **1 August 2011**. Representations should be made in writing to reviews@lgbce.org.uk or:

Review Officer (Durham)
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

We will make all representations available for inspection on our website and at the offices of the Commission. Any respondents who submit comments during this period of the review, and do not want all or any part of the response or name made public, must state this clearly in the response. Any such request should explain why confidentiality is necessary, but all information in responses may be subject to publication or disclosure as required by law (in particular under the Freedom of Information Act 2000).

Your Council's views on any aspect of the review would be very welcome. There are two particular issues for parish and town councils in an electoral review:

First, we may make recommendations for parish electoral arrangements; i.e. the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of parish councillors for each parish ward. We can only do this as a consequence of our electoral arrangements for Durham County Council.

Second, your parish may wish to comment on the electoral arrangements for County Durham. It is open to the Commission to put forward recommendations, for example in the interests of electoral equality, that parishes or parish wards be located in a specific electoral ward of the authority.

It would be helpful to us if your Council could publicise the Commission's further draft recommendations by displaying the enclosed poster.

If you have any queries, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Jessica Metherringham-Owlett
Review Officer

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020 7664 8525

Summary

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Durham County Council

Who we are:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas.

Electoral reviews:

The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of electoral divisions – for a local authority.

Why Durham?

In December 2007, the Government approved a bid from Durham County Council for a new unitary authority to take over the responsibility for all local government services formerly provided by Durham County Council and the six district councils.

This review will determine the electoral arrangements of the new council.

Council size

The Boundary Committee (predecessor body of the LGBCE) received proposals for council sizes ranging from 85 to 189 members. The former County Council proposed a council size of 126 members.

Subsequently, the Council provided further information justifying its proposed council size in the context of its political management structure and the manner in which it intended to engage with local communities. As a

result, the Committee were minded to adopt the Council's proposals. During Stage One the Committee invited representations based on a council size of 126. Our further draft recommendations are also based on this council size.

Electoral arrangements

Our draft recommendations propose that Durham's 126 councillors should represent ten single-member, 40 two-member and 12 three-member wards across County Durham.

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council Size	15 July 2008	Submission of proposals for council size to the Committee
One	17 March 2009	Submission of proposals of division arrangements to the Committee
Two	8 June 2009	Committee's analysis and deliberation
Three	15 Sept 2009	Publication of initial draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	24 May 2011	Publication of further draft recommendations and consultation on them.

Submissions received

During the initial consultation on council size 32 submissions were received, 58 submissions during Stage One and 243 submissions at Stage Three. Many of the submissions received at Stage Three voiced concerns not raised at Stage One and three entirely new electoral schemes were received, which had not previously been considered. As a result the Boundary Committee undertook limited further consultation in seven areas across the county. In total 139 submissions were received during further consultation.

All submissions may be inspected at our offices or those of the County Council. Submissions can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received to date, we have developed proposals which are broadly based on those of the Council. We note the level of consensus between different political

groups. Where we have moved away from the Council's proposals, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our further draft recommendations provide for 10 single-member, 40 two-member and 12 three-member divisions and will ensure good electoral equality both now and in five years' time.

Electorate figures

Following recent changes in legislation, we need to have regard to a five-year electorate forecast from the date of the publication of our final recommendations. We therefore requested that the Council provide forecasts for 2015 and 2016.

It became clear that revised forecasts provided by the Council would have resulted in significant electoral variances across the county based on the Boundary Committee's original draft recommendations. We therefore decided to suspend the review until the completion of the 2010 annual canvas to allow the Council sufficient time to produce a robust forecast.

After a pause in the review to establish that the trends displayed by the new projections were accurate and would be maintained, we are satisfied with the revised electorate forecasts provided by the Council and that they should form the basis of our draft recommendations.

What happens next?

There will now be a 10-week consultation period on the draft recommendations. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 1 August 2011.

We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Officer
Durham Review
The Local Government
Boundary Commission for
England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Or email:
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The full report is available to download at:
www.lgbce.org.uk.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010. It is independent of government and political parties, and is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas.

The
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for England

Electoral Review of County Durham

Tell us what you think

The independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England is asking people across County Durham to comment on proposed new local electoral arrangements for Durham County Council.

The aim of the review is to ensure that each county councillor represents a similar number of electors. To achieve this electoral equality, we need to re-draw electoral division boundaries across County Durham.

Our draft recommendations

Our draft recommendations propose new electoral divisions, boundaries and division names for every part of County Durham.

We are now asking local people to have their say.

- Do the proposed electoral divisions reflect local communities?
- How do you think the proposals can be improved?
- Are the names of the proposed divisions right?

The full recommendations, including detailed maps, are available on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

The report and maps will also be available in council buildings and libraries.

Have your say

Your views will make a difference.

You can submit your opinions to:

The Review Officer (Durham)

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street

London EC1M 5LG

Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

The consultation closes on **1 August 2011**

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