

MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR THE EASTERN REGION

Session 1 - Wednesday 8 June 2016

Present:

David Elvin QC, Commissioner
Neil Pringle, Commissioner
Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission
Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission
Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews
Matt Grist, Review Manager
Aarti Soba, Review Officer

Mr Grist and Ms Soba presented the scheme for the Eastern region that had been prepared by the Secretariat.

Sub-region

The Secretariat explained to the Commissioners why the preferred constituency pattern combined Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire to form a sub-region. The Secretariat explained the necessity to include electors from Cambridgeshire into both Norfolk and Hertfordshire, in order to keep all constituencies within the electoral quota.

Norfolk

Commissioners noted that Norfolk is currently allocated nine constituencies and that this allocation had not changed as part of the review.

The Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to move the Thurlton ward from South Norfolk CC to Great Yarmouth CC, rather than moving a number of North Norfolk CC wards into the latter constituency. Under this configuration fewer changes to the existing constituencies in Norfolk were required.

Commissioners did consider whether wards from the Lowestoft area could be included in the Great Yarmouth CC but noted that this would cross the county boundary between Suffolk and Norfolk. Commissioners considered this was not required given the allocation of constituencies to both counties.

In Norwich, Commissioners considered the potential constituency configurations. The Commissioners agreed that it was more appropriate not to include a central Norwich ward from North Norwich BC to South Norwich BC, as this avoided splitting the centre of the city between the two constituencies.

Commissioners noted that minor changes were required to the remaining constituencies in Norfolk in order to keep them within the electoral quota. Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's suggestion that the Littleport area from Cambridge County should be included in South West Norfolk CC. Commissioners considered this further when considering the constituencies for Cambridgeshire.

Cambridgeshire

The Commissioners agreed that it was necessary to move electors from the oversized constituencies in Cambridgeshire to those in Hertfordshire and Norfolk, for all constituencies in the region to meet statutory requirements.

The Secretariat explained to the Commissioners the configuration for including the Littleport wards from Cambridgeshire in South West Norfolk CC, outlining that these two fenland wards were similar to the adjacent wards in Norfolk. The Secretariat detailed that the wards had accessible road access and rail links between Littleport and Downham Market. The Commissioners accepted the rationale for these changes.

The Commissioners investigated why the Secretariat had added the Milton rather than the Histon ward to Cambridge BC. The Secretariat demonstrated that this was to keep Cambridgeshire BC within electoral quota and the Commissioners accepted the Secretariat's proposal.

In the north of the county, the Commissioners discussed at length to remove the two rural wards of Newborough and Eye and Thorney from Peterborough CC and instead include the more densely populated ward of Stanground Central to the south.

The Secretariat demonstrated that this configuration would split the community of Stanground. After considering all the other factors for Peterborough CC the Commissioners agreed that the proposal outlined by the Secretariat was the best configuration and resulted in less disruption to Peterborough CC and the remaining constituencies in Cambridgeshire. The Secretariat's proposal for Peterborough was approved by the Commissioners.

The Commissioners approved all the other changes to constituencies in Cambridgeshire. Commissioners accepted that the other constituencies required little change in order to keep them within the electoral quota.

Hertfordshire

Commissioners noted that Hertfordshire is currently allocated 11 constituencies and that this allocation would continue as part of this review.

The Secretariat explained the rationale for including three wards from Cambridgeshire to North East Hertfordshire CC, outlining that there has to be a cross-county boundary constituency between Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

The Secretariat outlined that the Royston area should be included in a Hertfordshire constituency. The Secretariat also explained that the villages around Royston have ties with villages in Hertfordshire. After some discussion the Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal of adding the three wards from Cambridgeshire in North East Hertfordshire CC.

Commissioners noted that the Hitchin and Harpenden constituency remains unchanged. Commissioners also noted that the majority of constituencies in Hertfordshire required few changes in order to ensure they met the electoral quota.

The Commissioners noted that changes to the constituencies of Watford BC and Broxbourne BC needed to formulate a pattern of constituencies that met the electoral quota. The Secretariat explained why they had incorporated the Great Amwell ward in Broxbourne BC and outlined that after exploring possible configurations this approach had the most merit and avoided splitting the town of Potters Bar.

Commissioners noted that Watford Borough is currently divided between constituencies and that this would continue. The Secretariat explained that the size of the wards in Watford did not provide many alternative configurations of constituencies. Commissioners agreed that the south eastern wards of Watford BC be included in the Hertsmere constituency.

The Commissioners accepted the explanation for Broxbourne BC and also approved the Secretariat's proposal of Watford BC.

All other proposed constituencies in Hertfordshire were approved by the Commissioners on the grounds that they involved a minimal amount of disruption whilst keeping all constituencies within the electoral quota.

Bedfordshire

Commissioners noted that Bedfordshire is currently allocated six constituencies and that this allocation had not changed as part of the review

The Secretariat explained the proposal to include the town of Houghton Regis in Luton North BC and Dunstable in South West Bedfordshire CC. It was explained that given the requirements of keeping constituencies within the electoral quota, and the geographical layout of neighbouring wards, alternative configurations were not available. The Secretariat also explained that this proposal avoided splitting the town of Dunstable. Commissioners agreed that Houghton Regis should be included with

the area of Luton North and that the constituency should be renamed to Luton North and Houghton CC.

In the remainder of Bedfordshire Commissioners noted that changes to constituencies was required due to changes to local government wards.

Essex

Essex is currently allocated 18 constituencies. The Secretariat detailed that it is entitled to 17.05 and therefore formulated a pattern of constituencies based on an allocation of 17.

The Secretariat explained that the reconfiguration to the Brentwood and Ongar CC excludes Brentwood train station located in the Warley ward. The Secretariat also explained that the size of electorate in the Warley wards, if added to Brentwood and Ongar CC would not meet the electoral quota.

After considering the rationale of the reconfigured Brentwood and Ongar CC the Commissioners agreed the proposal for this constituency. Commissioners also agreed to the following pattern of constituencies around the Thames estuary that includes Thurrock BC (unchanged), South Basildon and East Thurrock CC, Castle Point BC, Southend West BC, and Rochford and Southend East CC.

The Commissioners agreed that South Woodham Ferrers should be included in a constituency with the area of Rayleigh and that this constituency should be named Rayleigh and Woodham Ferrers CC.

Commissioners also noted that the three constituencies in the county of Essex of Chelmsford BC, Epping Forest CC and Thurrock remain unchanged. In considering this proposed pattern of constituencies the Commissioners agree to the proposal of the area of Essex.

Commissioners agreed that given the reconfigurations of constituencies, the existing names were no longer appropriate. Commissioners agreed to include the names of Witham and Maldon CC; North East Essex CC; and Harwich and Clacton CC in its initial proposals.

Suffolk

Commissioners noted that Suffolk is currently allocated seven constituencies and that this allocation had not changed as part of the review.

The Secretariat explained that the constituencies of Waveney CC and West Suffolk CC remain unchanged and that the only changes to Central Suffolk and North

Ipswich CC and Suffolk Coastal CC are due to the changes to local government wards.

The Commissioners discussed, the inclusion of the Pinewood ward in Ipswich BC. Commissioners noted that this reconfiguration created a constituency which best balanced the statutory factors and that the A14 provided a clear boundary for this constituency.

The Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal for Ipswich BC, Bury St Edmunds CC and South Suffolk CC and all other constituencies in Suffolk.

Session 2 - Monday 13 June 2016

Present:

The Hon Mrs Justice Patterson, Deputy Chair of the Commission
Neil Pringle, Commissioner
Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission
Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission
Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews

Mr Pringle presented the Commissioners agreed conclusions from Session 1. Mr Pringle outlined that Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire had been combined to form a sub-region.

Mr Pringle and the Secretariat explained the proposals that crossed the county boundaries in the areas of Littleport (between Cambridgeshire and Norfolk) and Royston (between Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire). Mr Pringle also highlighted the discussion from session 1 regarding Peterborough. It was explained that Commissioners had investigated whether not to include the two rural wards of Newborough and Eye and Thorney in Peterborough CC but concluded that this reconfiguration would split the town of Stanground.

In the Essex area, the Secretariat outlined the proposed constituencies developed during session 1, and explained the different configurations for the Brentwood and Ongar area. It was agreed that including the Warley ward to Brentwood and Ongar CC would not reflect the statutory factors.

In the Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk area, the Secretariat outlined the ward changes proposed to the constituencies of Luton North and Houghton BC, Broxbourne BC; Great Yarmouth CC; and Ipswich BC that allowed for less change to the counties and better reflected the statutory criteria.

The Deputy Chair agreed that the Commission's initial proposals would be as agreed during session 1.