

MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR THE NORTH WEST 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
Glenn Reed, Review Manager
Sam Amponsah, Review Officer

Mr Reed and Mr Amponsah presented the schemes for the North West region that had been prepared by the Secretariat.

Cumbria

Cumbria is entitled to 5.02 constituencies, a reduction of one. The Commissioners agreed that Cumbria could be considered as a sub-region in its own right.

The electorate of the existing Carlisle constituency at 60,527 is particularly low and needed to gain additional wards. The Commissioners agreed the inclusion of the remaining seven wards of the City of Carlisle. The constituency boundaries would therefore be wholly coterminous with the local authority boundaries. In order to increase the electorate of the Barrow and Furness constituency they considered it should continue to extend northwards as there are poor links across the Cartmel Sands that would hinder an eastwards extension. A coastal constituency containing the towns of Workington and Whitehaven was agreed in the west, extending to the River Mite in the south. Apart from creating a physical boundary, this also allowed for the Sellafield/Seascale complex to be included in a single constituency.

Commissioners noted that the remaining two constituencies would cover large geographical areas. They agreed that the town of Appleby-in-Westmorland - which they noted was the former county town of the historic county of Westmoreland - should be included in the Westmorland and Lonsdale constituency, which also includes the Southern Lakes. The Northern Lakes and Fells are included in the large Penrith and Solway constituency, which extends to the Solway Firth in the west. Despite its large geographical extent, the constituency only includes parts of two districts.

Lancashire

Lancashire is entitled to 14.06 constituencies. The Commissioners noted that this would result in a reduction from 16 to 14 constituencies - a significant proportion compared to other areas in the region. Although the county could be treated on its own, Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposal to cross the county boundary with Merseyside in the Southport constituency (see under Merseyside for further rationale).

In the north of the county, the electorates were such that Commissioners agreed that the towns of Morecambe and Lancaster should be included in the same constituency. It would not be possible to maintain the separation of the towns in different constituencies, as is the existing arrangement, as this would lead to a geographically large constituency that wrapped around Lancaster, the electorate of which would not meet the electoral quota. Although the ward of University and Scotforth Rural, on the south eastern periphery of Lancaster, is not included in the constituency, it is a predominantly rural ward (most of which lies to the east of the M6 motorway) with the only significant settlement being the university. Whilst the Commission recognised the merits of including the ward it considered that any other solution would result in greater division of the City of Lancaster. The physical geography, large ward sizes and small ward electorates in the northern part of the county led to the proposing of a new constituency they agreed should be called North Lancashire, rather than Forest and Bowland and Wyre, as suggested by the Secretariat.

On the Fylde, the Commissioners noted that the electorates of both Blackpool constituencies were very low and both needed additional wards to increase their electorates to within the electoral quota. They agreed that Blackpool North BC extend northwards to Morecambe Bay and include the towns of Fleetwood and Thornton. The River Wyre would form a physical boundary in the north east of the constituency. Blackpool South BC is extended both northwards and southwards, with the inclusion of the St Leonard's and Kinhouse wards around Blackpool Airport, thereby allowing the town of Lytham St Anne's to remain undivided in the reconfigured Fylde constituency, which also includes Poulton-le-Fylde.

The Chorley constituency would remain unaltered and the Commission agreed that the whole of the city of Preston could now be included in a compact urban constituency (the city is currently divided between constituencies). Blackburn would be unchanged, save for the inclusion of the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen ward of Fernhurst, and the existing Rossendale and Darwen constituency would be unchanged, save for the loss of the Fernhurst ward and the inclusion of the Worsley and Greenfield wards (both Borough of Blackburn with Darwen wards), which the Commissioners considered also improved the shape of the constituency.

The Commissioners agreed that the existing Hyndburn constituency, apart from the loss of the Worsley and Greenfield wards to Rossendale and Darwen CC, should include three wards in the east from the existing Burnley constituency. However, as it included wards from the Borough of Burnley, they considered that a change of name from Hyndburn (the name of the local authority which covers much of the constituency) to Accrington CC would be appropriate. In addition to the loss of the three wards from the existing Burnley constituency to Accrington, the reconfigured Burnley constituency extends north to include eight wards from the existing Pendle constituency (up to and including the town of Nelson).

As a result of these proposals, the Commissioners noted that the remainder of the existing Pendle did not contain sufficient electors. Although the existing Ribble Valley constituency does not need to be altered, Commissioners considered that it would have to change to accommodate change elsewhere and the reduction of two constituencies in the county. The remainder of the existing Pendle constituency is therefore included with a number of wards from the existing Ribble Valley constituency to form a geographically smaller constituency,

named Clitheroe and Colne CC, and which extends along the A59 to, but not including, the town of Bamber Bridge.

The electorate of the existing West Lancashire constituency would be increased with the inclusion of the Rufford, and Eccleston and Mawdesley wards. The South Ribble constituency, whilst losing these two wards, and the three wards of North Meols, Hesketh-with-Becconsall, and Tarleton to Southport CC (see below), would include six Borough of South Ribble wards in the east. The Commissioners agreed to the proposal, considering that this combined the town of Bamber Bridge in this constituency and also led to the River Asland/Douglas forming a physical boundary in its west.

Merseyside

The Commissioners agreed to review Merseyside as an entity without the Wirral, which would be considered with Cheshire as there would be a constituency that crossed the county boundary between the two. Excluding the Wirral, Merseyside has an entitlement to 9.94 constituencies with an allocation of ten.

Although Merseyside can be treated on its own, the Commissioners agreed with the proposal that the Southport constituency should extend across the Merseyside/Lancashire county boundary to include three Borough of South Ribble wards, with the River Asland/Douglas forming a physical boundary in the north east of the constituency. This would mean that the town of Formby, which otherwise would have to be divided in any proposal that did not cross the county boundary, could be contained within one constituency. They also considered that this allowed the town of Crosby (which is currently divided) to be contained in one constituency (Sefton Central CC).

Commissioners noted that four constituencies (Knowsley BC, Garston and Halewood BC, St Helens South and Whiston BC, and St Helens North - now reclassified as CC) could remain completely unchanged, and agreed that this should be so. The agreed proposals elsewhere in Merseyside meant that Liverpool Wavertree BC would be similar to the existing constituency, apart from the inclusion of the Greenbank, and Tuebrook and Stoneycroft wards. Similarly, the Liverpool West Derby constituency would be largely unchanged, apart from the loss of the Tuebrook and Stoneycroft ward, and the inclusion of the Fazakerley and Clubmoor wards. Liverpool Riverside would be changed only by the loss of the Greenbank ward and the inclusion of the additional two wards of Anfield and Everton. Walton would not now appear in a Liverpool constituency name. Commissioners agreed that the Bootle constituency should include the wards of County and Warbreck but not the Victoria ward, which contains part of the town of Crosby (and which is included with the Crosby ward of Blundellsands in Sefton Central CC).

Greater Manchester, Cheshire and the Wirral

Greater Manchester is entitled to 25.37 constituencies, a reduction of two; Wirral to 3.14 constituencies, a reduction of one; and Cheshire West and Chester, East Cheshire, Warrington, and Halton (hitherto combined and referred to as "Cheshire") is entitled to 10.34 constituencies, a reduction of one. As Lancashire is entitled to 14.06 constituencies and was treated on its own, the Commission considered that creating constituencies within the 5%

electoral quota would require the crossing of the boundaries between the Wirral and Cheshire and Cheshire and Greater Manchester, and that there was no justification to cross the county boundary between Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

Greater Manchester

The Commissioners noted that most of the change in the metropolitan county would have to take place in the east of the county where a greater proportion of existing constituencies had electorates that were too small. They also aimed to retain as many of the existing constituencies without any change as was possible, and to this extent were able to propose an almost continuous link through the west of the Metropolitan county to its centre and then south, of unaltered constituencies. Thus the composition of the Wigan, Makerfield, Leigh, Worsley and Eccles South, Salford and Eccles, Blackley and Broughton, Manchester Gorton, Manchester Withington and Wythenshawe and Sale East constituencies would be completely unchanged in the Commission's proposals, the only break in this chain being Manchester Central, which is required to lose a ward (Commissioners considered that this should be Moston, which they agreed should be in the Oldham constituency). The Commission's general rule to designation means that, although not changing in composition, the Wigan, Makerfield, Leigh, and Worsley and Eccles South constituencies change from being county to borough constituencies. This arrangement in Greater Manchester means that twelve - almost half of the constituencies are either unchanged, or have just one ward change made to an existing constituency.

Stretford and Urmston would also be largely unchanged, although the Commissioners considered that the rural Bucklow - St. Martin's ward should be included in a constituency with the town of Altrincham, and that the two west Sale wards of Ashton upon Mersey and St Mary's should be included in the constituency, having transferred from the existing Altrincham and Sale West constituency.

In the north of the metropolitan county, the Commissioners agreed that Bolton West would be unchanged apart from the inclusion of the central Bolton ward of Halliwell (and a borough constituency designation). As a consequence, Bolton North East would lose the Halliwell ward and would include the Rumworth and Great Lever wards from the existing Bolton South East constituency. The Commission agreed that Bury North BC be unchanged, apart from the inclusion of the Radcliffe East ward from the existing Bury South constituency and a name change to Bury BC, as there would no longer be a Bury South constituency. As a result of these changes, the Commission agreed that a new constituency, Farnworth BC, be created from five Borough of Bolton wards and three Borough of Bury wards from the existing Bolton South East and Bury South constituencies respectively. Although it was noted that this did lead to the division of the town of Radcliffe, in view of the urban density and very close proximity of numerous towns in Greater Manchester, it was considered that some division of communities would be unavoidable. Another new constituency was agreed by the Commission - Prestwich and Middleton BC from the existing Bury South, and Heywood and Middleton constituencies - which contains five wards each from the Boroughs of Bury and Rochdale. It would include the towns of Prestwich and Middleton, and most of the town of Whitefield.

Although the electorate of the existing Heywood and Middleton constituency is within the current electoral quota, the Commission's proposals would change it considerably in order to accommodate changes elsewhere. The Commissioners agreed to the proposed, significantly reconfigured, Rochdale constituency to include five wards from the existing Heywood and Middleton constituency and six from the existing Rochdale constituency (all Rochdale Borough wards). The constituency would include the town of Heywood (but not Middleton); Commissioners noted that it would contain the whole of the town of Rochdale in a single constituency, whereas it is currently divided between constituencies. In this area they also agreed to a rural, moor-based constituency called Littleborough and Saddleworth CC - constructed from five wards each of the Boroughs of Rochdale and Oldham. Commissioners agreed to the proposed Oldham BC, which they considered, brought much of the town of Oldham into a single, more compact constituency, and which included the ward of Moston from the existing Manchester Central constituency.

A new constituency, Failsworth and Droylsden BC, was agreed by the Commission. It would be constructed from four existing constituencies, but contain parts of only two boroughs (Oldham and Tameside). Commissioners noted that both the Failsworth East and West, and Droylsden East and West wards are contained within the constituency, although they noted that its shape was not ideal. The agreed Ashton-under-Lyne constituency would extend eastwards to include the town of Stalybridge, and the Dukinfield and Dukinfield Stalybridge wards would be united in one constituency having previously been in separate constituencies.

The agreed cross-borough boundary constituency of Marple and Hyde would include four Tameside Borough wards (including the town of Hyde) and four Stockport wards (including the towns of Romilly and Marple). The core of the existing Denton and Reddish constituency (which includes both Tameside and Stockport borough wards) would be contained in another borough crossing constituency, which the Commissioners agreed to name Stockport North and Denton. It would comprise three Tameside wards (Denton) and five from Stockport, including Reddish and the centre of Stockport town. Commissioners also agreed to the proposal that Cheadle Hulme and Cheadle remain together in a new Stockport South and Cheadle constituency.

The Commissioners noted that the loss of constituencies and the theoretical entitlements meant that it was necessary for them to cross the county boundary between Cheshire and Greater Manchester. This has been done in two areas. Firstly, the southern part of the Borough of Stockport, including the towns of Bramhall and Hazel Grove, would be linked to the northern part of the existing Macclesfield constituency, including the town Poynton, and the town of Handforth from the existing Tatton constituency. It was considered that these areas might not be not dissimilar in composition and outlook. The other cross-county constituency was considered along with the other constituencies under "Cheshire".

The Wirral

The Commissioners agreed that two of the three Wirral constituencies should be changed by the inclusion of just an additional ward - Upton in the case of Wallasey BC (from the existing Wirral West constituency), and Bebington in the case of Birkenhead BC (from the existing Wirral South constituency). This would mean that the Bebington ward would not be included

in the agreed Bebington and Heswall constituency. The Commissioners considered a number of alternative names for this constituency, but concluded that none were entirely appropriate and hoped that consensus on a name would be found in the representations and public hearings once the initial proposals had been published.

Cheshire

The Commissioners' agreed Ellesmere Port and Neston CC would be similar to the existing constituency, though Commissioners noted that the electorates required the crossing of the Wirral (Merseyside) county boundary with Cheshire. The Wirral ward of Eastham would be therefore included in this constituency, which was considered to be part of the urban continuum between Bebington and Ellesmere Port.

The Commissioners' agreed proposals for the City of Chester constituency result in a reasonably compact constituency, which, apart from changes forced by changes to local government ward boundaries (including the Chester Villages ward) is unchanged. Halton only needed an additional 163 electors to meet the electoral quota. Commissioners therefore agreed that Halton be unchanged, apart from the inclusion of the additional Halton Borough ward of Halton Lea. They also noted that both Warrington constituencies could be wholly contained within the Borough of Warrington. They therefore agreed to the proposal that the only change in the Borough of Warrington should be the transfer of the Latchford East ward from the South to the Warrington North constituency, in order to bring both constituencies within the electoral quota.

Commissioners agreed that the Crewe and Nantwich, and Congleton constituencies should remain unchanged, apart from the realignment of revised ward boundaries.

However, they agreed to considerable change to the Weaver Vale constituency as a result of the changes elsewhere in Cheshire. The constituency would exclude the Halton Borough ward of Halton Lea and the wards containing the town of Northwich. It would include the Marbury ward from the existing Tatton constituency. The Commission considered whether the name "Weaver Vale" remained appropriate, but decided to continue with that name, as they did not consider that any of the other possible names were more appropriate.

The existing Eddisbury constituency would also be significantly altered in the Commission's proposals, which the Commission agreed to now be called Eddisbury and Northwich in view of the addition of the town of Northwich. It loses some of its western wards to the Weaver Vale constituency and extends northwards to include the town of Northwich and the Witton and Rudheath, and Shakerley wards from the existing Tatton constituency.

The Commissioners' agreed proposals would result in the Macclesfield constituency losing the areas in the north around Poynton to the cross-county Bramhall and Poynton constituency, as described above under "Greater Manchester", and would extend in the northwest to include the Wilmslow and Alderley Edge areas from the existing Tatton constituency.

At 63,358, the electorate of the existing Tatton constituency is too small, and, as a result of unchanged constituencies and changes elsewhere in Cheshire, and the necessary reduction

in the number of constituencies in Cheshire to ten, the Commissioners agreed that the remaining wards of the existing Tatton constituency be included in a further cross-county boundary constituency between Cheshire and Greater Manchester. They therefore agreed that the three wards of Knutsford, Mobberley and High Legh be included in a new constituency with eight Borough of Trafford wards, including the town of Altrincham. They considered whether Altrincham and Knutsford should be the name of the constituency as proposed by the Secretariat, but decided to name it Altrincham and Tatton Park to recognise the existing Tatton element in this new constituency.

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. He outlined the proposed sub-regions of Cumbria, Merseyside (minus the Wirral), Lancashire, and Greater Manchester with Cheshire and the Wirral.

In Cumbria, the increase in the low electorate of Carlisle CC would be achieved by including the remaining seven wards from the City of Carlisle. The Deputy Chair agreed with the creation of a coastal constituency containing the two towns of Workington and Whitehaven in the west, and with the proposals for the remaining three constituencies in the county.

In Lancashire, while the county could be treated on its own, the Secretariat had proposed to cross the county boundary in Merseyside, as this was the only solution for Merseyside that allowed the town of Formby to remain undivided. The Deputy Chair agreed with this proposal. She agreed with the proposals that would allow the towns of Preston, Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley to be contained within relatively compact constituencies, and with proposals to deal with the low electorates of existing constituencies on the Fylde. She noted that the towns of Lancaster and Morecambe had been included in the same constituency and that this had led to the geographically large constituency that her colleagues had suggested be called North Lancashire, with which she agreed. She also agreed with the proposals for the South Ribble constituency, which would include Bamber Bridge, and the new Clitheroe and Colne constituency.

In Merseyside (minus the Wirral) Mr Pringle explained how the cross-county boundary constituency of Southport had allowed for the town of Formby to remain whole, and for Crosby to be included within a single constituency. The Deputy Chair agreed with this proposal and for the other constituencies, noting that four constituencies were unchanged.

In Greater Manchester, the Deputy Chair approved of the proposals that would result in nine constituencies remaining wholly unchanged, and three changed by one ward only, although

she noted that there had been considerable change in the eastern part of the county where the electorates were generally lower than elsewhere. However, she approved of the Secretariat's proposals, which aimed to keep communities whole, such as Rochdale in a single constituency, and the arrangements, which saw Denton and Droylsden, Reddish, and Cheadle and Cheadle Hulme kept together in constituencies. She considered that the cross county constituency of Bramhall and Poynton was a suitable arrangement between Greater Manchester and Cheshire East.

In the Wirral, the Deputy Chair agreed with the proposals and concurred that it was hoped that a more suitable name for the Bebington and Heswall constituency could be forthcoming in the representations.

In Cheshire, despite the need for another constituency to cross the county boundary with Greater Manchester, it was agreed that there was much that had not required change (or change due only to changes to local government ward boundaries) i.e. the Secretariat's suggestions for the City of Chester, Halton, Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton, and both Warrington constituencies. It was noted that both the existing Weaver Vale and Eddisbury constituencies would have to change significantly, but she agreed with her colleagues that there did not appear to be a more appropriate name for the proposed Weaver Vale constituency. The Deputy Chair agreed with the second cross-county constituency between Cheshire and the Borough of Trafford, and the name, which would recognise that part of the constituency that had been in the former Tatton constituency.

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