

MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON THE INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION

Session 1: Thursday 9 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 schemes for the Yorkshire and Humber region that had been prepared by the Secretariat.

Sub-regions

The Secretariat explained to the Commissioners why the preferred constituency pattern combined South, West and North Yorkshire to form a sub-region. The Secretariat detailed that by including two wards from North Yorkshire in two West Yorkshire constituencies, a considerable amount of additional flexibility is gained in how constituencies in West and South Yorkshire can be configured. This flexibility enabled the Secretariat to provide a pattern of constituencies, which better reflected the factors, listed in the Act.

The Secretariat explained that an alternative sub-region of West and South Yorkshire could be created, with North Yorkshire as a stand-alone county. Under this configuration fewer changes to constituencies in North Yorkshire was required but that the pattern of constituencies configured in the remainder of the region may not better reflect the statutory factors.

The Secretariat also explained why they had suggested to creating a Humberside sub-region. Commissioners noted that under this proposal it enabled constituencies to be built within the electoral quota around Hull and north and south of the Humber, by crossing local authority boundaries.

Humberside

Humberside is currently allocated 10 constituencies. The Secretariat detailed that it is entitled to 8.85 and had formulated a pattern of constituencies based on an allocation of nine.

In the south of the sub-region, the Secretariat outlined the proposed constituencies in the Grimsby area. The Commissioners considered whether it was possible to unite all the central wards together in Grimsby and Cleethorpes BC. The Commissioners investigated different configurations and accepted that the proposals for Grimsby and Cleethorpes were the best available - a Grimsby North and Barton CC and a Grimsby South and Cleethorpes BC.

The Commissioners outlined that the initial proposals report should emphasise the fact that the Grimsby proposal outlined above was the most favourable option, even though it divides Grimsby into north and south. The alternative would have been to divide both Humberston and Grimsby and it was agreed that the proposal had the merit of dividing fewer towns.

The Commissioners noted that in the area of Hull it was possible to recommend two of the three Hull constituencies fully within the Hull City Council boundary.

They also agreed that the proposed Hull West and Haltemprice BC was an appropriate way of reconfiguring boundaries given the reduction by one constituency in Humberside.

The Commissioners noted that the remaining constituencies in this sub-region were similar to existing ones, although they did require some reconfiguration to ensure they met the electoral quota. In considering this pattern of constituencies, the Commissioners suggested that the proposed Howden and Goole CC be named Goole CC for simplicity.

North Yorkshire

The Commissioners noted that North Yorkshire is currently allocated eight constituencies and this allocation had not changed as part of this review.

The Commissioners agreed with the Secretariat's proposals for North Yorkshire after some discussion of the merits of adding the two wards of Boroughbridge and Claro to Selby and Ainsty CC from the existing Harrogate and Knaresborough CC. After considering all the other factors within North Yorkshire the Commissioners agreed that this proposal was the best option to increase the number of electors in Selby and Ainsty and provide more flexibility in developing a pattern of constituencies in the remainder of the region.

The Commissioners also discussed at length the adding of two North Yorkshire wards to West Yorkshire constituencies. In particular, the adding of the Byram and Brotherton ward to the proposed Normanton, Castleford and Outwood CC. The issue under discussion was the lack of accessibility by road from the rest of the latter constituency to the Byram and Brotherton ward.

The Secretariat detailed that it was aware of this lack of access. However, given the requirement of keeping all constituencies within the electoral quota, and the geographical layout of neighbouring wards, the Secretariat had found this option to be the only viable way to unite the Airedale ward with the rest of Castleford. The Secretariat had not been able to identify an alternative proposal that would add any other wards from North Yorkshire to the proposed Normanton, Castleford and Outwood constituency.

After some discussion, the Commissioners agreed that adding the Brotherton and Byram ward created a constituency which best balanced the statutory factors. Commissioners also agreed with the unification of Airedale ward with the rest of Castleford.

Commissioners noted that Castleford was still accessible to people in the Brotherton and Byram ward, albeit by taking routes that lie outside of the proposed constituency.

The Commissioners considered that this should be explained in the initial proposal report so respondents are aware of this issue and perhaps identify alternatives that better meet the Commissions own concerns.

In the remainder of North Yorkshire, Commissioners noted that the decision to include cross-county boundaries in this part of the region did require other constituencies to be reconfigured. Commissioners noted that the proposals were similar to the existing constituencies and in most cases had only changed by one or two wards to ensure they met the electoral quota.

The Secretariat explained that not only did adding the aforementioned North Yorkshire wards to the proposed Normanton, Castleford and Outwood CC, and to the proposed Pontefract CC, make possible the uniting of Airedale ward with the rest of Castleford; it also made possible a number of important improvements to constituencies in West and South Yorkshire as compared to the alternative scheme (which treats North Yorkshire as a stand-alone county).

West Yorkshire

Commissioners noted that wards from both Leeds and Bradford needed to be combined in order to formulate a pattern of constituencies that met the electoral quota. The Secretariat explained that the size of electorates in the wards of Bradford and Leeds provided the Commissioners with limited options for configuring constituencies.

The Commissioners considered whether Headingley ward might be kept with North West Leeds (where it currently sits) rather than Leeds North West. However, this modification would have resulted in both constituencies not meeting the electoral quota. The Commissioners agreed to constituencies in this area as Leeds North West BC, Leeds North East BC, Leeds East BC and Leeds Central BC.

As a result of its proposals for the Leeds and Bradford areas, Commissioners considered what other changes were required in the area of West Yorkshire. Firstly, Commissioners noted that consequential changes would be required to Calder and Colne Valley CCs.

Commissioners noted that Calder Valley CC no longer needed to include wards from the Elland area to ensure it met the electoral quota.

Commissioners also noted that the Colne Valley CC could be extended further south to ensure it met the electoral quota. However, Commissioners observed that extending the boundary further south did result in the crossing of a county boundary, namely to include Penistone in the constituency with Colne Valley.

Commissioners noted that Halifax needed to be divided between constituencies in order to ensure they met the electoral quota. Commissioners agreed to constituencies of Calder Valley CC, Colne Valley CC and Halifax BC.

Commissioners noted that Rothwell could be kept with Elmet and that Elmet and Rothwell CC would remain unchanged.

The Commissioners then considered the proposals for the Castleford area. Commissioners noted the Secretariat's suggestion of keeping Castleford with the Airedale ward, as this did not divide the town of Castleford between constituencies. However, Commissioners did explore other potential constituencies, which would not have the lack of access that this constituency would have.

Commissioners agreed that this should be aired in the initial proposal report and detailed that any alternatives would require dividing Castleford between constituencies and significant changes to existing constituencies across the region.

Commissioners noted that the existing Batley and Spen CC could not be retained in order to have a pattern of constituencies that met the electoral quota. The Commissioners therefore suggested the creation of a Spen BC constituency that would no longer include the area of Batley. Commissioners agreed that Batley should be included in a constituency with the area of Morley and that this constituency should be named Batley and Morley BC.

Commissioners noted that in developing a pattern of constituencies for the region it was also required to cross the county boundary in the areas of Barnsley and Hemsworth. Commissioners considered that the eastern wards of Barnsley should be included in a constituency with Hemsworth and that this constituency should be called Barnsley East and Hemsworth CC.

South Yorkshire

Commissioners noted that South Yorkshire is currently allocated 14 constituencies and that it has a theoretical entitlement of 13 as part of this review, a reduction of one. The Secretariat explained that the size of electorates in the wards in Sheffield provided few options in configuring constituencies. Commissioners also noted that the decision to combine North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire to form a sub-region had provided greater flexibility in developing a pattern of constituencies.

Commissioners considered potential constituencies for the Sheffield area and proposed the constituencies of Sheffield Hallam and Stocksbridge CC, Sheffield North and Ecclesfield BC, Sheffield East BC, Sheffield South BC and Sheffield Central and West BC.

Commissioners noted that in formulating these constituencies some of the western wards of Rotherham needed to be included in a constituency with parts of Sheffield.

Commissioners considered potential constituencies for the Doncaster area and agreed that the following should be included in the initial proposals - Doncaster Central BC, Doncaster East CC and Doncaster West CC.

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 North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire had been combined to form a sub-region. It was noted that although North Yorkshire could be treated as a standalone sub-region this did not assist in creating constituencies in the Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield areas that best reflected the statutory criteria.

Mr Pringle and the Secretariat explained the proposals that crossed the county boundaries. Mr Pringle also highlighted the Castleford and Airedale constituency did not have complete internal road access but that any alternatives would result in the dividing Castleford between constituencies.

In the Humberside area, the Secretariat outlined the proposed constituencies developed during session 1 and explained the different configurations for the Grimsby area. It was agreed that dividing Grimsby between two constituencies rather than three provided for a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

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