

MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS ON THE REVISED PROPOSALS FOR THE LONDON REGION - 10 July 2017

Present

Mr Justice Nicol, Deputy Chair
David Elvin QC, Commissioner
Neil Pringle, Commissioner
Howard Simmons, Lead Assistant Commissioner (London region)
Richard Wald, Assistant Commissioner (London region)
Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission
Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission
Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews
Donna Smith, Review Manager (London region)
Kevin Gaye, Review Officer (London region)

Apologies were received from Emma Davy, Assistant Commissioner (London region)

The Assistant Commissioners presented the evidence and their recommendations to the Commissioners.

Overview

There had been a significant degree of change from existing constituencies in the initial proposals. Those initial proposals had generated a relatively high degree of responses, from a diverse spread of respondents. Some constituencies had been split between multiple boroughs (as many as five in some cases), which had been particularly contentious. Overall, there had been a high level of support for sub-region split of North/South of Thames, and the use of the River Lea as a relatively firm barrier between the North east and the rest of North London.

North of Thames

There had been strong opposition to removing Chapel End from Walthamstow, so the Assistant Commissioners recommended that it be returned, which allowed Bridge ward to be included in Chingford and Woodford, for which there had been support. This also allowed the reconstitution of an Ilford South constituency.

The Enfield area was a particularly problematic area to find a good solution for. It had difficult geography, squeezed between River Lea and Edgware Road, and the main problematic constituency was surrounded by proposed constituencies that had attracted positive support. Therefore the Assistant Commissioners recommended a split ward in this area. They had looked at a number of possible options, but the best approach seemed to be to split Brunswick Park ward, taking polling district CCD only into Chipping Barnet, and having the rest in a restored Enfield Southgate.

Opinion had been divided on whether Kilburn High Road divides or unites the communities around it. On balance, the Assistant Commissioners did not feel there was sufficient evidence to support making a change from the initial proposals in that area. They felt there was logic in the view that had been put forward that Abbey Road and Regent's Park should join a Westminster constituency, whilst Lancaster Gate and Hyde Park should go in a constituency with Paddington. They also felt Holborn and St Pancras should be renamed 'Camden and St Pancras', for which there had been positive consultation support.

There had been opposition to including Shepherd's Bush with Ealing, due to a lack of historical ties. It therefore seemed to be preferable to include it with Willesden instead, with a consequential recommended name change to 'Ealing and Acton'. Commissioners recalled that developing initial proposals in the Ealing area had been particularly problematic.

There had been strong opposition to combining Harrow on the Hill with Wembley. The Assistant Commissioners noted the strong Jewish communities in Stanmore, linked to twin synagogues in the area. They recommended including Sudbury with Greenford, noting again a strong religious (here Sikh) community in the area. Commissioners noted that the recommendations were not ideal, but did accord with the balance of community representations in response to the initial proposals. Commissioners also noted the recommendation allowed retention of an unchanged Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner constituency.

South of Thames

In the south west of London, there had been significant opposition to the splitting up of Wimbledon, so the Assistant Commissioners proposed recasting to include Roehampton. There had also been very strong opposition to splitting up the Mitcham and Morden constituency, also, as well as concern about the Croydon initial proposals. Assistant Commissioners therefore recommended using some Croydon wards to help recast Mitcham and Morden. They felt moving Shirley ward into Croydon allowed for a better reconstitution there, and also allowed Crystal Palace to be incorporated into Beckenham. Ripple effect going east then would allow the creation of 'Dulwich and Sydenham' and 'Lewisham and Catford' constituencies, plus a better formulation of an 'Erith and Crayford' constituency.

Commissioner deliberations

The Commissioners recalled that at the initial proposals stage London had been particularly difficult to resolve in line with the rules, but the Assistant Commissioners' recommendations did seem to be an improvement on that, and in line with the representations received.

Commissioners noted that the single recommended split ward solution did appear to be a compelling case, as it saved significant consequential undesirable ripple effects that would otherwise arise, particularly the negative

impact on Tottenham (as demonstrated by responses in secondary consultation): hence this ward split would strongly support significantly better compliance with statutory factors across a wide area.

Commissioners agreed to support all the recommendations of the Assistant Commissioners, which seemed to be a sensible set of modifications to initial proposals, grounded in the responses to initial and secondary consultation.