

# MINUTES OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS ON THE REVISED PROPOSALS FOR THE YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER REGION - 17 July 2017

## **Present**

Mr Justice Nicol, Deputy Chair  
Neil Pringle, Commissioner  
Joh Feavours, QPM, Lead Assistant Commissioner (Yorkshire and the Humber region)  
Collette Rawnsley, Assistant Commissioner (Yorkshire and the Humber region)  
Sam Hartley, Secretary to the Commission  
Tony Bellringer, Deputy Secretary to the Commission  
Tim Bowden, Head of Reviews  
Glenn Reed, Review Manager (Yorkshire and the Humber region)  
Aarti Soba, Review Officer (Yorkshire and the Humber region)

Apologies were received from David Elvin QC, Commissioner

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

## **Overview**

The region sees a reduction from 54 to 50 constituencies, with most of that drop coming in the South and West Yorkshire sub-regions. Additionally, many current constituencies are either above or below the permitted electorate range. A lot of change is therefore required, particularly in West Yorkshire. The Assistant Commissioners felt the initial proposals had been well justified and probably the best they could have been in the absence of splitting wards.

The consultation responses to the initial proposals contained a total of 14 wards suggested for splitting, and whilst seeking to adhere to the Commission's policy of keeping ward splitting to 'exceptional' cases only, the Assistant Commissioners will recommend splitting three wards in the region.

Of the five main issues that were raised on consultation, the Assistant Commissioners felt the recommendations provided good solutions to 'three and a half' of those, with the other one and a half not really being resolvable without detrimental impact in other areas.

The Assistant Commissioners' recommendations would allow Humberside and North Yorkshire to be treated as their own discreet sub-regions, and see the number of constituencies remaining unchanged from their existing composition increase from three to eight. The recommendations would also improve a number of other aspects, and represented changing 62% of the initial proposals. About 1500 representations had been received at first consultation, and just under 500 at the second consultation, with by far the

largest petition campaign coming in relation to keeping Mosborough in Sheffield.

### **Humberside**

In Humberside, the main issue that consultation had raised was respondents' desire to keep Grimsby together. However, this is not numerically possible under the statutory electorate requirements, so the question was whether to establish one constituency containing the bulk of the Grimsby, or split the town broadly equally between two constituencies. There had been general recognition from respondents that there was no easy fix, and Assistant Commissioners recommended an equal split of the town as a better solution than an imbalanced split. They also supported an amendment of the name to include 'Great Grimsby' in the name of both.

There had been some concerns raised in relation to the particular configuration of the Hull constituencies, and the Assistant Commissioners' recommendations tried to keep the constituencies as close as possible to the existing composition, whilst also keeping the university and student areas together as far as possible.

### **North Yorkshire**

In North Yorkshire, there had been strong representations from Great Ayton that they should be included in a constituency with Richmondshire. The Assistant Commissioners felt that the original proposals for this area had ultimately been a consequence of securing the retention of whole wards in South Yorkshire, and in light of their recommendations for the latter area, were able to recommend what they felt would be a more acceptable solution for Great Ayton.

They understood the desire of Filey to be included in a constituency with Scarborough, but could not find a sensible way to deliver this (although it is recommended to remain in its current constituency). Under their recommendations in this sub-region, four constituencies would be unchanged from their existing composition, with the other four only seeing minor changes, and nearly all the representations received from the area would be directly satisfied.

### **South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire**

Sheffield was a problematic area for configuring constituencies satisfactorily under the statutory rules. There had been a large amount of discontent expressed in relation to the initial proposals for the area, though most of the counter-proposals recognised the difficulties, by being obliged to split wards in order to address the perceived issues with the initial proposals: whole ward solutions did not really address these issues and caused significant 'domino effect' disruption. There had been a large campaign to keep Mosborough and Beighton wards in Sheffield constituencies. The Assistant Commissioners did a site visit to inspect proposed split ward solutions: this strongly suggested

one appropriate split in Sheffield would be of Burngreave ward, rather than of Shiregreen and Brightside, or Hillsborough wards. The Commissioners questioned further on the appropriateness of various suggested split ward solutions. The Assistant Commissioners' further suggested split of Crookes ward was along a green space, with a hill that split east and west between Hallam and the centre of the city. The final split - of Central ward - was along what appeared to be a self-defining boundary of the ring road. It was also noted that the recommended splits were reasonably close – though not identical – to recent rewording that had been implemented in Sheffield. The Assistant Commissioners confirmed that proposed solutions that split less than three wards did not solve the key problems. In contrast, three split wards enables keeping all five Sheffield constituencies within Sheffield City Council boundaries, but also allows a lot of other areas to experience significantly less change, e.g. Rother Valley can be unchanged, Rotherham would need only one ward change, and North Yorkshire can be a self-contained sub-region (enabling the changes in that sub-region already detailed).

The Assistant Commissioners felt it had been possible to recommend Doncaster constituencies that were closer to the existing composition than the initial proposals had been. With Barnsley council's area running a long way west-east, it was currently split between four constituencies, and initial proposals had taken that up to six: the Assistant Commissioners' recommendations would bring that back down to five. Although this was hardly ideal, Barnsley council's area had been another particularly problematic one, as evidenced by the fact that no feasible satisfactory solutions for the area had been suggested as counter-proposals. The Assistant Commissioners also felt that the Barnsley council area (as distinct from the actual town of Barnsley) didn't really appear to have a unifying character, having instead seemingly distinct localised identities in its constituent parts.

In Bradford the number of electors had necessitated a reduction of one constituency, which was always going to be difficult. A large degree of dissatisfaction had been expressed about the distribution of southern Bradford amongst multiple different constituencies in the initial proposals. The Assistant Commissioners felt their recommendations would keep most of those wards together in a re-established Bradford South constituency. The remaining two wards (Wyke and Tong) would not be retained in a Bradford South, but would be kept with each other in a 'Bradford' constituency. The Assistant Commissioners recognised that having Bradford Moor ward with Leeds-facing Pudsey wards is not ideal, but could not find an alternative solution that worked without significant disruption to surrounding areas. The Assistant Commissioners had considered the split-ward options in Bradford, but did not feel that the case was as strong and compelling as that in Sheffield: a much improved solution was achievable with whole wards in Bradford, where it really wasn't in Sheffield. That being so, there needed to be a ward that transfers from Bradford to Leeds, because of electoral quota requirements: the Assistant Commissioners had looked very carefully at the only three that were realistically in question for such a transfer, but felt that the other two wards much more clearly look west.

The east-west split of Halifax had been unpopular in consultation on the initial proposals, so the Assistant Commissioners instead recommended the preferred 'upper Calder' and 'lower Calder' arrangement. They recognised that the recommended Featherstone constituency was a somewhat strange shape, but this had been driven by the opportunity to return the constituencies of Selby and Ainsty, and Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford to their existing composition, and create a compact Wakefield constituency.

The Assistant Commissioners noted the concerns that had been expressed about the splitting of Rawdon, but felt this was due to the local government boundaries splitting the area, rather than the constituency boundaries. It was also noted that the Guiseley and Rawdon ward that part of Rawdon was in was one of the largest ward electorates in the whole region.

### **Commissioners' deliberation**

Commissioners accepted all the recommendations of the Assistant Commissioners, being persuaded of the strength of the case for the splitting of the three wards in Sheffield, and noting that Sheffield was also inhibited by a regional boundary to the south and west.

### **Further discussion on 18 July**

In relation to the split wards, Commissioners examined the new local government ward boundaries that had been in use since May 2016, and determined:

- in Central ward, the principle of the recommended split was accepted, but the Commissioners' actual revised proposal should align the proposed boundary with boundary of the new Central ward (which was slightly different from 2015 polling district boundaries); and
- in the other two Sheffield split wards, the revised proposals should use the 2015 polling district boundaries as recommended by Assistant Commissioners (as the new ward boundaries were too different to be adopted).