

**Minutes of the Commissioners' decision meeting for final recommendations on the
West Midlands region
21 May 2018**

Present

Mr Justice Andrew Nicol, Deputy Chair
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
Alex Newton, Review Officer

Overview

The Commissioners noted the overview information from the paper presented by the Secretariat.

Conservatives generally supportive apart from two Birm constituencies. Labour opposed to constituencies in Black Country and provided counter-proposals. Lib Dems had wide ranging counter proposals, including further ward splits (as did a number of other more localised responses).

The review team presented the proposed final recommendations for each sub-region to the commissioners. It was noted that these proposals had been agreed following briefings and discussions with the lead commissioner for the region, David Elvin QC.

The Commissioners noted the presentation, and in particular the following points of contention.

Warwickshire and Coventry sub region

Splitting of Warwick and Leamington had been a main point of contention from the initial proposals, as had constituency crossing boundary with Worcestershire. Revised proposals put Warwick and Leamington together, but meant Coventry constituencies needed to be reconfigured, putting Kenilworth with a Coventry constituency. Some minor discontent, but no strong evidence to support changing from revised proposals.

Solihull sub-region

Could contain two whole constituencies. There had been some representations that Sheldon ward should be included in a Solihull constituency, but this did not seem to be backed by any strong evidence, so no change to revised proposals in this area.

Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire, and Telford and The Wrekin sub-region

Revised proposals had included fewer rural wards in the Worcester constituency. As noted above, had avoided crossing boundary with Warwickshire in revised proposals. Adjustments around Redditch, and Bromsgrove and Droitwich, but the area was almost impossible to apportion without splitting communities somewhere.

Malvern and Ledbury cross-county constituency was unavoidable, and did not seem possible to move the Old Gore ward without causing significant disruption elsewhere.

General support for Shropshire constituencies, so no change required.

West Midlands metropolitan sub-region (less Coventry and Solihull)

Main difficulty is the large ward sizes, Revised proposals split wards where it was felt to be really necessary, and kept to a minimum.

Main controversy at initial proposals had been in the area of Dudley and Sandwell boroughs, so very significantly reconfigured at revised proposals. Revised proposals managed to keep all but two Birmingham council wards in Birmingham constituencies.

Birmingham Yardley constituency at revised proposals had attracted significant opposition. Recognised that Nechells and Sheldon wards had little in common, but could not see a better arrangement that did not involve splitting more wards or causing significant disruption in surrounding areas.

Black Country difficulties had led to ward splits being recommended in the area, in order to meet numerical requirements (because of the size of the wards), but it was important to still keep the number of ward-splits to a minimum. Had been some alternative places for ward splits to be made, but generally they had received support, so no further changes to these constituencies.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent sub-region

Revised proposals adopted a counter-proposal from the initial consultation in the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent area. Stoke-on-Trent South and Stone had been a bit less popular, but overall the pattern across the area had been popular, and no better alternative had been proposed.

Noted difficulty of Whittington and Streethay ward, but no strong justification for making another ward split here, just to solve this localised issue: there was no benefit to the wider area.

Name changes

Agreed Birmingham King's Heath, as was a previous constituency name and fairly central area to the constituency.