

**Minutes of the Commissioners' decision meeting for final recommendations on the
South East region
22 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
Roger Winter, Review Manager

Overview

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

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, Neil Pringle.

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

Berkshire and Surrey sub region

Had been difficulties through the review with formulating a suitable distribution between Newbury, Reading and Wokingham. Final recommendation kept Wokingham as existing constituency. Recognise that Bucklebury in particular isn't ideally allocated, but alternatives caused a lot more change to the other constituencies.

Other difficulties had been around composition of Slough, Windsor and Bracknell, as Windsor need to grow, but Bracknell and Slough were both very urban, compared to very rural nature of most of Windsor constituency. Recognised crossing the county boundary into Surrey by taking in Windlesham ward was not ideal, but it was better than taking an urban ward out of Bracknell.

Minimal concerns that could have anything done about in the rest of Surrey, in particular allocation of Thorpe ward, where putting it elsewhere would create much more disruption.

Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, Kent and Medway sub region

Brighton had been the most hotly contested area in the region. Split of Newhaven ward had not proven popular, so looked again at splitting a ward in central Brighton. Agreed to take all four polling districts east of the Old Steine into the central Brighton constituency. Confirmed that this was allowing a better overall approach to all three Brighton constituencies, as well

as preventing undesirable compositions further east (e.g. in Bexhill and Battle constituency, and allowing Ticehurst to be brought back into a Sussex constituency).

East Kent had also proven difficult, in part because of the peninsula nature of the geography. Agreed that Seasalter should go in with Whitstable. Had received representations that Sandwich looks north, but also others that it looks south. Final recommendation agreed to put Little Stour and Ashtone into Canterbury, Sandwich in Dover and Deal, and Seasalter with Whitstable. Recognised this would split Margate, but there really didn't seem to be an ideal solution for everywhere.

Had been concerns raised from some areas just outside Tunbridge Wells, which had been allocated to Tonbridge constituency, but there was no alternative that did not produce worse disruption and issues elsewhere.

West Sussex sub region

There had been a small number of representations about where exactly the boundary should lie between Horsham and Crawley, but insufficient evidence to warrant changing from revised proposals. No other changes in a county that required very little change.

Buckinghamshire sub region

Only real area of contention was in Milton Keynes, where the question was which ward from Milton Keynes should go into Buckingham. On testing both approaches at initial and revised proposals, the stronger evidence favoured reverting back to the initial proposals approach.

Hampshire sub region

There had been concerns from some villages south of Winchester and Andover, that they were being taken away from their most natural affinity with nearby major town, but the overall composition of this part of the region meant it was not possible to secure a better solution for these areas as well. Had difficulties in respect of what ward to add to New Forest East: having tested two options at initial and revised proposals, but evidence suggested initial proposals were the least worst option.

Isle of Wight sub region

Discussion is really all about where the dividing line should be, with a common theme being the River Medina was a good dividing line, but the final recommendation kept Cowes and Newport as largely undivided in their constituencies.

Oxfordshire sub region

Continuing difficulties in various parts of Oxfordshire, which had led to something that was recognised as not a perfect solution in a number of places. Could hopefully be addressed in future reviews, which could take account of significant housebuilding in a number of areas, such as Bicester, which under the rules the Commission could not anticipate.

Name changes

Agreed Chatham and Malling, as there is no such thing as 'The' Mallings.

Agreed Lewes and West Wealden, to take account of significant wards from Wealden (beyond just Uckfield).

Agreed Weald of Kent, as this was a name that would have more recognition for this geographical area than 'Mid Kent'.

Agreed Milton Keynes South, and Buckingham and Milton Keynes West, to recognise the presence of significant Milton Keynes ward in latter constituency.

Agreed East Thanet, as accurate descriptor of the constituency.