

Boundary Review - Civic Affairs

1. AMENDED RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) To convey to the Council Council and the Boundary Commission the updated information about the numbers of electors in the City.
- ii) To convey to the Boundary Commission that projected numbers in the rest of the County are uncertain and these might make the City under-represented if they retain the proposed 63 divisions, in that divisions in the city could be significantly larger than those in the rest of the County.
- iii) To acknowledge that submissions should take account of the updated figures and of the Commissions guidelines and so will not endorse the Labour Group's submission appended to the report.
- iv) To agree that co-terminosity between County Divisions and City Wards is very desirable for good governance and any period when this is not the case should be as short as possible.
- v) To agree to respond to the next phase of the Boundary Commission's consultation after full consideration by the Civic Affairs Committee.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The County Council's submission to the Boundary Commission was based on numbers taken from the Electoral Register of February 2014 and the projections for new housing made in December 2013.

2.2 These numbers understate the figures for the City in two principle ways

i) They overlooked new student accommodation projected to house 2,410 students. As University records show that approximately 16% of students are not citizens of the UK, EU or a Commonwealth country, it is reasonable to assume that 84% (ie 2,025) are expected to be eligible to vote in UK elections.

ii) The most recent projections for new housing in the City, published in December 2014, updates information about housing that should be considered as part of the review period. Some sites should be included as they will be brought forward quicker than previously expected eg. in Queen Edith's division.

It also shows that some new build has been wrongly allocated to the present wards.

Much of the new build on the Darwin Green site will not be in the present Castle ward as previously expected, but in Arbury and the new build on the CB1 site will be in the present Trumpington ward rather than Petersfield. These errors of placement have now been accepted by the Boundary Commission which reissued its data last week.

iii) The December 2014 projections for housing, and the consequent calculations for numbers of electors, are not yet available for the other Districts. The overall numbers for the County are therefore uncertain.

2.3 i) As the Labour submission was based on numbers now shown to be flawed, it should not go forward.

ii) Also the Labour submission pays little regard to the principle set out by the Commission

that schemes need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities;

a) As primary schools tend to be the focus of their community, keeping boundaries some way from them is good practice. In the Labour scheme, Mayfield School, Park Street School and St Philip's School are all divided from a sizeable section of their immediate catchment area.

b) Dividing the dense community in the Park Street area into two wards does not respect that local community

c) Taking the northern part of Romsey to put it with Barnwell (Abbey) was suggested by Labour at the last review and provoked an unusually large negative response from the residents as people in that area consider that they live in Romsey which has a very clear community identity.

d) Taking account of long standing boundaries is also considered to be good practice.

There is a very long established boundary between the North and West of the city and the South and East, along the river and the line of Elizabeth Way, East Road, Gonville Place, Lensfield Road and Fen Causeway to the river again. This, with minor flexibility around, for example, Lensfield Road, is very well established for nearly 50 years and separates the city into two equal halves. The Labour submission ignores this boundary.

2.4 The review of the County Divisions will call into question the present City Ward boundaries. Co-terminosity is recognised as the best way to work for good governance and for the convenience of residents. A review of City Ward boundaries should follow as soon as possible.

2.5 Paragraph 4 of the report suggests that the response is agreed in consultation with Chair and spokes. This is an inadequate way of considering an issue such as this.

There should be a meeting of Civic Affairs, specially arranged if necessary, at which the issue can be discussed in public with input from other councillors, residents groups, the political parties and other interested persons.