

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Electoral Review – Warding Patterns

14 March 2013

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on the next stage of the Electoral Review of the district and to consider whether the Council should make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on its draft warding patterns for Lancaster City Council.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee considers whether the Council should make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on its draft warding patterns; and**
- (2) If so, to consider the content of the submission to be agreed by the Committee in time to meet the LGBCE's deadline of 18 March 2013.**

(1) Introduction

- 1.1 Members will be aware that Council has authorised this Committee to consider and approve any submissions to the LGBCE during its electoral review of Lancaster district. The Committee endorsed a submission to the LGBCE regarding Council size on 15 March 2012 and a further submission regarding warding patterns on 13 September 2012.
- 1.2 The Commission has now issued its draft warding patterns for Lancaster City Council and moved on to the third stage of its review.

(2) Consultation on draft warding pattern stage

- 2.1 The LGBCE published its draft warding patterns for an eight week period of consultation starting on 22 January 2013. The Commission's recommendations are explained in the summary document and map attached at Appendix A. A larger scale version of the map supplied by the LGBCE will be brought to the meeting.

- 2.2 It should be noted that, as at each stage of the process so far, Parish Councils, individual councillors and political groups are able to make their own representations to the LGBCE.

(3) Proposal Details

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether any submission should be made on behalf of the Council regarding the Commission's draft warding patterns and, if so, to consider the process for drafting and agreeing the submission in time for the closing date of Monday, 18 March 2013.
- 3.2 The Council's last submission to the LGBCE on warding patterns is attached (Appendix B) for reference. The submission referred specifically to the electoral imbalance in Ellel Ward which was the catalyst for the review and suggested that the boundaries of the Ellel and University wards be changed to place the University student accommodation blocks currently in the boundary of Ellel ward within the University ward.
- 3.3 The LGCBE's draft warding pattern addresses the Ellel/University wards issue by proposing to include the accommodation blocks which currently lie in Ellel ward, as well as the parish of Scotforth, in a new three-Member University and Scotforth Rural ward. Ellel ward would be smaller and remain a two Member ward.
- 3.4 Other proposals in the draft regarding numbers of Members per ward are:
- Dukes ward to have two Members instead of one
 - Castle ward to be renamed Marsh and go down to two Members from three
 - Warton to be included in Carnforth as a three Member ward, so two wards of one and two would become one ward of three
 - Harbour to reduce from three to two Members
 - Heysham Central to increase from two to three Members
 - Torrisholme to reduce from three to two Members
 - Bare to increase from two to three Members
 - Poulton to reduce from three to two Members.

These changes balance each other out, so that there is no change to the overall council size of 60 members.

There would be some consequential changes to Parish Council wards. Most significantly, the warding pattern of Morecambe Town Council would increase from 6 wards to 12.

- 3.5 Council officers asked officers from the LGBCE for further explanation about a few points that were not clear on the map and the information received back is set out below to aid Members' understanding:

The ward boundary of Melling with Wrayton looks odd on the map.

With regard to Melling with Wrayton, the ward boundary follows the slightly convoluted parish boundary in this area. The pdf map appears to show a 'detached' area as it does not display to a sufficient level of detail to indicate where the gap is, but it is in fact a contiguous boundary. The 'detached' area is included in the proposed Upper Lune Valley ward.

There are currently 6 wards for Morecambe Town Council but the proposal is for 12. Why is that? Could the following be created instead:-

**Bare ward consisting of K, L and M.
Poulton ward consisting of S and T.
Westgate ward consisting of Q and V.
Torrisholme ward consisting of R and U.
Heysham North and Heysham Central - could this remain as one ward, simply called Heysham?
(Harbour ward to remain as per the proposal).**

and for Ellel parish, could F and E be combined and called University ward?

The Commission is required to take into account both its proposed new district ward boundaries and existing county electoral division boundaries when recommending consequential parish electoral arrangements. There are a number of areas in Morecambe Town Council where the district ward and county boundaries were previously coterminous but deviate as a result of the Commission's draft recommendations. Some of the proposed parish wards are therefore created to reflect these deviations – for example, Bare ward will contain three parish wards as the boundaries of Morecambe West, Morecambe North and Morecambe South county divisions run through this ward and so require it to be split into three for parish warding purposes.

The same would apply to your queries regarding Poulton, Westgate and Torrisholme and also of the University parish wards in Ellel parish. The parish ward boundaries of Heysham North/Heysham Central follow the proposed new district ward boundary along Balmoral Road and behind Cleveland's Avenue.

For the City wards, could the area marked R be transferred to Torrisholme from Skerton West? It would seem to be more logical.

The area marked 'R' is included in Skerton West as the Commission considered that the residential estate in this area (Roeburn Drive/Lune Drive etc) should be included in Skerton West ward, and the Morecambe/Heaton-with-Oxcliffe parish boundary cuts through the middle of this estate. In this case the Commission considered that keeping this residential estate wholly within one ward would be a better reflection of its statutory criteria.

The Commission has advised that it has not finalised its conclusions and, in light of further evidence, may put forward final recommendations which differ from those set out in the draft recommendations. However, it is important to stress that representations opposing the Commission's draft recommendations should suggest alternatives which are supported by evidence.

(4) Carnforth Town Council

- 4.1 Carnforth Town Council recently emailed the Chief Executive and two City Councillors to express its concern at the LGBCE's proposals for the warding arrangements relating to Carnforth, Bolton-le-Sands and Warton. The email states:

"Carnforth Town Council had hoped that the LGBCE would have used this review to right the wrong they committed at the last review by cutting off part of Carnforth Town and lumping it in with Bolton-le-Sands, much to the annoyance of several hundred electors from Crag Bank.

To this end, CTC submitted detailed proposals and arguments to the LGBCE – and we were surprised that there were no representations from City Council on this subject.

When we read the draft proposals, the Council was deeply disappointed that their arguments had been brushed aside and then aghast that the LGBCE have gone further – not only taking more from Crag Bank, but putting the rump of Carnforth in with Warton.

Carnforth Town Council believes that this is a travesty of local democracy and calls on Lancaster City Council, its leaders and its political parties to respond to these proposals and oppose them in the strongest terms."

- 4.2 Carnforth Town Council has advised that it has already made a detailed submission to the LGBCE; however, the Committee may feel that it wants to make comments on this particular issue in any response submitted by the City Council.

(5) Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 5.1 No draft submission has been prepared. The issues with the proposed warding patterns that Democratic Services consider most challenging administratively have already been raised in the questions above and the answer has been provided that the consequential parish warding pattern changes are a result of the requirement to have regard to the County Divisions and City wards.

- 5.2 The options open to the Committee are
- to choose not to submit a response to the LGBCE with or without commenting on the issues raised by Carnforth Town Council; or
 - to make comments at this meeting to be drafted into a response by the Democratic Services Manager, approved by the Chairman, and emailed to the Commission in time to meet the deadline.

- 5.3 Members are again reminded that the option is always available for all Parish

Councils, political groups and individual Councillors to make their own submissions direct to the LGBCE supporting its proposals or suggesting an alternative, fully evidenced, warding pattern.

(6) Conclusion

- 6.1 Whilst the proposals do address the electoral imbalance in Ellel ward they also create new administrative challenges, particularly with the increase in the number of parish wards resulting from the changes to the district wards in Morecambe and Heysham. Unfortunately, there is no suitable solution to fully address the Ellel ward imbalance which will not impact on surrounding wards to maintain electoral equality. In turn, this will cause consequential warding pattern changes for the parishes of the district.
- 6.2 The Committee is asked to consider the issues set out in this report in relation to the next stage in the electoral review process.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None directly arising from this report. The Commission aims to recommend warding patterns that have good electoral equality, reflect community identities and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report. The changes will not have any material impact on City Council budgets.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

None.

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

www.lgbce.org.uk

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