

GENERAL REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

1. The topics covered in this Newsletter are:-
 - a) **Progress with the general review**
 - b) **Indicative timetable for the next three groups of review areas**
 - c) **Electoral Registration Officers and how they assist in the general review**
 - d) **The representation period**
 - e) **Town and Parish Councils**

Progress with the general review

2. The table below shows the progress made with the first three groups of review areas.

Group	Review area	Date of provisional recommendations	Date local inquiry will commence
1	Hertfordshire Lincolnshire Northamptonshire	1 June 2000 1 June 2000 1 June 2000	5 December 2000 5 December 2000 5 December 2000
2	Bath and North East Somerset Bristol Cumbria North Somerset Somerset South Gloucestershire	6 July 2000 6 July 2000 6 July 2000 6 July 2000 6 July 2000 6 July 2000	9 January 2001 (am) 11 January 2001 16 January 2001 No local inquiry 17 January 2001 9 January 2001 (pm)
3	Isle of Wight Northumberland Surrey	6 July 2000 6 July 2000 6 July 2000	No local inquiry 26 January 2001 10 January 2001

Indicative timetable for the next three groups of review areas

3. The next three groups of review areas will be:-

Group 4

The London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston upon

Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Wandsworth.

Group 5

The London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Enfield, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Westminster, and the City of London.

Group 6

The counties of Swindon, Warwickshire, Wiltshire

4. It is expected that the provisional recommendations for the areas in Group 4 will be published in February 2001, those for Group 5 in April 2001, and those for Group 6 in June 2001. If local inquiries are required for the areas in Group 4, it is expected they will be held in June and July 2001, those for Group 5 in November and December 2001, and those for Group 6 in February 2002.

5. The composition of future groups of review areas, and the timing of the publication of the provisional recommendations, will depend upon the progress made by the Local Government Commission for England, who are presently conducting Periodic Electoral Reviews of electoral arrangements for local government, and the Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions who has responsibility for making the Orders which give effect to the recommendations of the Local Government Commission for England. It is expected that the review areas will be formed into a total of eighteen groups during this general review. Information about later groups will be published in future Newsletters.

Electoral Registration Officers and how they assist in the general review

6. The Commission recognise that they could not conduct their business without the contribution of others: indeed, the successful conduct of the general review requires it. One such group are the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs). In addition to supplying the Commission with information about the number of parliamentary electors in each ward in their district, they also provide information about suitable locations within their district where the Commission's proposals may be displayed for inspection by members of the public. They also provide assistance by arranging for the Commission's proposals to be put on display and by supplying information about which local newspapers the Commission may find suitable for publishing their statutory notices.

7. During this general review, the EROs will probably be involved to a much greater extent than at any previous general review. The reason for this is the current round of Periodic Electoral Reviews (PERs) being conducted by the Local Government Commission for England.

8. The Boundary Commission's general review began with an announcement in the London Gazette on 17 February 2000 and, as a result of this, they are statutorily required to base their recommendations on the numbers of parliamentary electors on the electoral registers on that date. The Commission have a long held policy of using district wards as their basic building block for creating constituencies and, for this general review, they decided they would use the new wards resulting from the PERs being conducted by the Local Government Commission for England. They concluded that it would be a far from satisfactory situation if the new constituencies they recommended were to be based on wards which had been abolished or which would be abolished before they submitted their report to the Home Secretary. Because of their decision to use the new wards, the Commission will

need to ask each ERO to supply information about the number of electors in the new wards before they can review an area. This request will usually be made as soon as the Order giving effect to the new wards is made by the Secretary of State, which may be many months before the new wards come into effect at local government elections.

9. The Commission recognise that supplying the figures for the new wards may not, in many cases, be an entirely straightforward matter. In some areas of the country, new wards came into effect at the local government elections held in May 1999 or May 2000. The electorates for these wards were contained in the electoral registers published in February 2000 and it was not necessary to ask the relevant EROs to undertake any additional work. However, in many areas of the country the new wards will be introduced over the next few years. The Commission understand that the current position is that some Orders introducing new wards may not be made until 2003 or 2004.

10. Because of the statutory requirement that the Commission must base their recommendations on the numbers of parliamentary electors on the electoral registers in February 2000, their Secretariat will be contacting EROs, once the Order affecting their district has been made, to ask how many electors **would have been in each new ward had that ward existed on 17 February 2000.** Therefore, it is essential that those EROs whose districts have recently undergone, or have yet to undergo, a PER by the Local Government Commission for England retain their February 2000 registers until such time as they have supplied the figures to the Commission.

11. With this in mind, the Commission asked the Constitution Unit at the Home Office to give advance warning of this requirement to EROs. Items appeared in RPA Circulars Nos.430 and 434 on 22 November 1999 and 9 October 2000 respectively. The Association of Electoral Administrators have also agreed to help the Commission by bringing this matter to the attention of their members.

12. The Commission wish to take the opportunity provided by this Newsletter to thank all EROs for their continued assistance and the support they have given over many years. They particularly wish to thank those ERO's who have already provided accurately re-based 2000 ward electorates. These electorates will be used in the Commission's provisional recommendations for the review areas in Groups 4 – 6.

The representation period

13. Some local authorities have told the Commission that the period of one month for representations to be made about the Commission's proposals is too short, and that it does not allow sufficient time for their council to respond because their regular council or committee meeting cycle does not coincide with the representation period. This is a difficulty that has been encountered before and commented on at previous general reviews. Indeed, the Commission referred to the problem in their Fourth Periodical Report.

14. Section 5(2)(b) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 prescribes that representations may be made within a period of one month following publication of the Commission's recommendations. Whilst bound by the provisions of statute, the Commission recognise that, in some circumstances, this can cause difficulty. Although they will extend the representation period when it spans a major public holiday, such as Christmas and Easter, they consider they must adhere to the statutory period of one month. They ask that all representations should be made within the statutory period.

15. Local authorities should note that it is the Commission's practice to send a news release describing their proposals direct to local authorities and other interested persons one week before the statutory notice is published in local newspapers. This, in effect, does give additional time for the proposals to be considered and a representation made before the period expires. Also, Newsletters

give advance notice of when provisional recommendations are to be published for any given area so that local authorities and others can make any necessary advance preparations. However, whilst they are not statutorily required to consider any representations made after the representation period has elapsed, the Commission have taken, and will continue to take, such late representations into account.

16. The Commission wish to point out that, in the event that a local inquiry is held into their provisional recommendations, all representations will be made public beforehand so that interested persons may prepare for the local inquiry. Any representation received too late to be issued with the others, cannot be given the same weight because interested persons may not have had the opportunity to consider it before the opening of the inquiry.

Town and Parish Councils

17. Some Town and Parish Councils have commented that they find it difficult to inspect the Commission's proposals for their area, or were unaware of the proposals. As already explained earlier in this Newsletter, details of the proposals are published in local newspapers and put on display locally for public inspection. Additionally, the Commission issue a news release to local, regional and national newspapers, and radio and television stations. They also send copies of their proposals direct to the county, borough and district councils, the local MPs, the political parties' headquarters, and other interested persons and organisations, including the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). The proposals are also placed on the Commission's web site.

18. The Commission is not statutorily required to notify individual Town and Parish Councils. However, as has been shown, there are a number of ways for Town and Parish Councils to make themselves aware of, and inspect, the proposals. Town and Parish Councils may also find it appropriate to make an arrangement with their district or county council to be informed of proposals.

19. In a further effort to ensure that Town and Parish Councils are able to make themselves aware of, and respond to, their proposals, the Commission have discussed this matter with the NALC. It was agreed that the NALC would supply the Commission with the addresses of their County Associations who, in turn, will be supplied with copies of the Commission's Newsletters. These Newsletters contain information about when the Commission will publish recommendations for a county or London borough. Additionally, the County Associations will be supplied with copies of the news releases which give information about the Commission's recommendations for their areas. It is understood that the NALC has asked its County Associations to make Town and Parish Councils in their areas aware of the contents of these Newsletters and news releases.

Enquiries

20. Any enquiries about timetable matters should be made to Terry Bergin (020 7533 5170) or Glenn Reed (020 7533 5163). Alternatively they can be contacted by e-mail on terry.bergin@ons.gov.uk or glenn.reed@ons.gov.uk or by writing to them at the address at the foot of the front page of this Newsletter.

21. Any enquiries about the first three groups of review areas should be made to:-

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