

# METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

CABINET - 14 MARCH 2002

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## PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW - BOUNDARY COMMISSION SUBMISSION

### REPORT OF BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND SECRETARY

#### 1. Executive Summary

The report sets out the progress made since the report to Cabinet in December 2001 which proposed a Council size of 22 wards, with 66 members which was to be submitted to the Boundary Commission. Since then, the three political parties have been working on submissions separately as to how the new ward maps may look. The purpose of this report is to invite Cabinet to make a recommendation to Council about a proposed submission on the Council's behalf.

#### 2. Background

2.1 Members will recall previous reports outlining the process for Wirral's periodic electoral review. On 4 December a set of figures was lodged with the Boundary Commission which comprised the 2001 electorate from the newly published December Register together with projected electorate figures for 2006. Cabinet and, subsequently, Council resolved that the size of the Council should remain at 22 wards, each of which would have three members. It was recognised that within the overall size remaining the same a significant change would need to take place to ward boundaries to reflect community identity and in particular to achieve electoral equality.

2.2 Having determined the Council's size, the Council must submit to the Boundary Commission draft proposals for its area by 25 March 2002. The Commission will then consider these proposals and publish draft recommendations in the autumn of this year. There will then be a further consultation on the draft recommendations, after which the Commission will make final recommendations on changes to electoral arrangements. This is likely to result in all out Council elections in May 2004.

2.3 All three parties have been preparing submissions about new ward boundaries. Whilst there are significant points of difference between the parties, on a comparison of the three submissions received the following points can be made:-

- all parties provided for 22 wards.
- Egerton Ward has been broadly consumed within Tranmere and Prenton Wards

- a new Ward has been created in the west of the borough, broadly in the Pensby/Barnston/Thingwall area
- the four main wards of Wallasey (New Brighton, Liscard, Seacombe and Wallasey) are as a group broadly similar although there are slight boundary variations between them
- Bromborough and Eastham Wards remain broadly unchanged although there are slight boundary variations around the Woodward Road/Dell area
- the M53 between Upton/Woodchurch and Bidston/Noctorum is accepted by all parties as a significant barrier. Further south, approaches vary but the motorway is seen as a less significant barrier between Brimstage and Bebington.
- Rock Ferry/Chester railway line is seen as significant barrier in the south of the borough (notably Plymyard Avenue to Brookhurst Estate) but less so in the north. The West Kirby railway is accepted as less of a barrier.
- the Birkenhead Dock system is accepted as a significant barrier by all parties.

2.4 Individual ward maps showing each party's submissions will be available by the time of the Cabinet agenda together with figures showing the electoral variance for the proposed new wards. The key aim is to achieve so far as possible electoral equality and ideally all wards should be below 5% plus or minus the average though rarely up to 10% plus or minus average electors per ward may be considered by the Commission. Once maps are to hand, these will be circulated to Cabinet and all members. Cabinet are invited to make a recommendation to Council on the proposed nature of any submission to the Boundary Commission. If the three parties can agree on a submission, then it is suggested that a composite scheme be put forward to Council for onward submission to the Boundary Commission. If the political parties cannot reach agreement upon a scheme, then it is suggested that the three submissions put forward by the parties be submitted via Council to the Boundary Commission with an indication of the level of support for each. If that is to be the case, then at the same time as submitting the sets of proposals, the points of similarity between each of the party submissions should be identified.

2.5 Cabinet's recommendation is to Council on 19 March. The actual text of a submission will need to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 25 March 2002. It is requested that the Borough Solicitor and Secretary be given delegated authority to prepare such a submission in consultation with the three Party Leaders and based upon the recommendations of Council.

### 3. Equal Opportunity Implications

The submission(s) to be made should be based upon improved electoral equality between all wards of the borough.

4. Local Agenda 21 Implications

None.

5. Other Implications

None.

6. Local Member Support

This report affects all wards.

7. Background Papers

None, other than published documents.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet be invited to make a recommendation to Council upon an appropriate submission to the Boundary Commission on Wirral's period electoral review of boundaries.

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and Secretary

JEM/LW.

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