

REPORT TO: CITY COUNCIL - 18 OCTOBER 2004

REPORT ON: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION - PROCESS FOR 2007 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS USING SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTES

REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)

REPORT NO: 706-2004

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform elected members of the process proposed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for establishing new electoral wards for Dundee to accommodate the Single Transferable Voting system to be introduced in the 2007 Local Government Elections and to agree a submission process for the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Council note the process and procedures as detailed by the Local Boundary Commission.
- 2.2 The Council agrees the establishment of an Advisory Group to the Chief Executive as outlined within Section 11 of the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct Local Agenda 21 implications arising from this report.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

6 BACKGROUND

As set out in the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is now required to conduct a review of electoral arrangements within the Dundee City Council area and to report with recommendations to Scottish Ministers.

As part of the process, a direction from the Minister required the Commission, within 14 days of the date of the direction to inform the Council in writing by letter to the Chief Executive of the following:

the timetable proposed by the Commission for consultation;

the timetable proposed by the Commission for the review;

the general approach the Commission proposes to adopt in formulating its proposals for ward boundaries;

the information the Commission would like to have available in formulating those proposals;

the assistance which the Council would be asked to render to the Commission in the process of reviews; and

such other matters as the Commission considered appropriate.

The Commission arranged a meeting with officers of the Council which was held on 27 September 2004 at which the Local Government Boundary Commission's representatives outlined further details regarding the above requirements.

7 **THE REVIEW**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland consists of six commissioners who are appointed by open competition for a maximum of three terms totalling not more than ten years. These commissioners are politically independent and the Commission is independent from the Scottish Executive and supported by a small secretariate which also operates independently from the Scottish Executive.

Although there has been an amendment to Schedule 6 rules, electoral parity will be the prime consideration in drawing up new boundaries although consideration will be given to local ties and easily identifiable boundaries. At the end of the consultation period and when the Commission arrives at its recommendations these proposals are submitted to the Minister who decides whether these are adequate. It is intended that the new wards would give an "better" recognition of "communities" than previously. The Local Boundary Commission officers indicated that they had been utilising geographic information systems since 1997 and in advising the Kerley Committee had been asked to bolt together existing wards. Through use of GIS the Commission's officers had been able to establish four potential ward scenarios for eleven Councils in two days and in a further exercise took two weeks to complete a couple of scenarios for every Council in Scotland. However, this process took no cognisance of community or parity and therefore was flawed with a 15-20% difference from reality and the Commission therefore decided to look at postcodes as a building block in regard to matching electoral areas and allocating electors. However, it demonstrated that the process could be undertaken within a relatively short timescale.

The Commission undertook an exercise in March of this year attempting to match the register against postcodes and electorate and found a high correlation of match throughout Scotland and in Dundee's case only 0.096 of the electorate was not matched. This is a very accurate result as this translates to only 99 electors not being found in Dundee out of a electorate of over 108,000.

In regard to addressing the community focus, there is a need to recognise "perceived" communities and to minimise the need to split communities between wards. This is more easily done in rural areas and within large urban areas such as in Dundee it is more difficult to establish boundaries as they may become more blurred.

8 **DETAILED REQUIREMENTS FOR THE REVIEW**

The Commission used details of the electorate contained in the July 2004 register which has been de-personalised by removal of names and adjusted to take account of "other electors". This includes such variances as businesses, hotels and student residences where there are large numbers. Statistics will be provided by the Commission for Council electors; dwellings on a postcode basis; for polling districts and for currently

existing electoral wards and this data will be used on a common basis by all parties concerned.

In order to establish this common baseline there are data requirements that local authorities are expected to deliver and these include any new build expected to be completed and occupied by 2009, any proposed demolitions that will take place by 2009 and other developments e.g. student halls of residence, residential homes, with all this data to contain a current postcode reference or location map so that it can be plotted against areas. The intention is to undertake a five year projection as this is required by the Schedule 6 rules. On previous occasions projections were based separately on GRO information, Local Boundary Commission and Local Authorities information respectively with differences between the projections. This time there will be only one forecast agreed with the Councils on a projection based on the same base figures.

In looking at the community focus early research has shown that in rural areas community council boundaries were adequate for identifying communities but this was more difficult in built-up areas in regard to what the perception of a community is and what kind of ward structure can be constructed. The review intends to afford the opportunity to identify existing anomalies and move towards solutions as much larger wards will allow this to happen. The Commission intends to provide information to Councils to assist with merging ward designs and this will include GIS files to facilitate examination of options for change so allowing wards to be constructed on a common basis.

In regard to public consultation, maps and other documentation on the proposals agreed with the Council will be available from the website www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk. However, postcode files will be copied into Councils only for review purposes with data not being released outside Councils.

9 **OTHER ISSUES**

In addition to technical discussions regarding the above, there are a number of issues that were raised by officers of the Council with the Commission with the main points listed below:

- 1 the discussion regarding process should take place over the next four weeks with officers of the Council making any proposals within that time. It was established that in Dundee's case there would be two options for STV, either five wards of four members and three wards of three members or alternately seven wards of three members and two wards of four members. It was intimated that Ministers are not looking to change the number of electors in Councils at this time and therefore there was every likelihood that there would be 29 elected members for Dundee under the new scheme.
- 2 Parliamentary constituency and Scottish Parliamentary constituency boundaries will not be considered and will not act as any constraint on the new ward boundaries. Unlike on previous occasions there would be no requirement to write a ward boundary description as this is to be addressed by means of a locked GIS file deposited both at parliament and in Councils once the new ward boundaries have been established.
- 3 The only reason for a public enquiry into the Commission's recommendations would be in a case where there was insufficient information for the Commission to make a decision and there would have to be a particular reason why that would be the case.

10 **TIMETABLE**

The timetables proposed by the Commission for consultation and for the review are outlined in Appendix A with the intention that all reviews in Scotland should be completed by August 2006 so allowing sufficient time to establish polling districts for the new wards and to facilitate the election in May 2007.

The outlined timetable in Appendix A is fairly self-explanatory. However, it was indicated by officials that in the event of any proposals from the Commission that do not involve "bolting together" existing wards then there will be an explanation and this will come at Stage 3.

In addition, the public consultation will include Internet and by CD Roms and any second public consultation will only be required if there is significant changes.

11 **PROPOSALS**

In order to assist the Chief Executive to engage in dialogue with the officers of the Local Boundary Commission and to formulate proposals for new electoral wards in Dundee a small working group of officers has been established with the Chief Executive as chair and with the Assistance Chief Executive (Community Planning) as the lead officer for contact with the Commission. It is proposed to expand this advisory group with the addition of four elected members, one from each of the main political parties to inform and advise the process.

It is proposed that the working group would arrive at two proposals one consisting of five, four member wards and three, three member wards and one consisting of seven, three member wards and two, four member wards unless the working group agreed that one option was preferable to the other.

11 **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

12 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

Chris Ward
Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)..... 11/10/04

Appendix A**Review Timetable**

- Stage 1:** Initial consultation with Councils and the early establishment of an ongoing dialogue between the Commission and Councils for the purpose of the Review.
- Councils are given full opportunity to communicate to the Commission any proposals or ideas that they may have in relation to the design of new wards. The Commission outlined the methodology underlying its intended approach to the Review.
- Clarification of general review issues, both technical and administrative. Exchange of factual information between the Commission and Councils relevant to the design of proposed wards.
- Discussion/exchange of information of any areas of concern.
- 12 weeks**
- Stage 2:** Development of initial proposals by the Commission for each Council area with ongoing consultation between the Commission and Councils as necessary on emerging issues.
- Preparation of maps, supporting documentation and GIS files of proposed ward boundaries for Councils once the Commission has completed drafting its initial ward schemes.
- 10 weeks**
- Stage 3:** Initial proposals released to Councils. Two months allowed for the Council to comment on proposals, offer amendments and or alternatives. Further discussions with Council as required throughout this stage to clarify emerging issues relating to the initial proposals.
- 9 weeks (2 months)**
- Stage 4:** Full consideration by the Commission of issues arising through stage 3 which might lead to revision/adjustment of initial proposals. Further liaison with Councils taken forward on a needs basis.
- 8 weeks**
- Stage 5:** Publication of the Commission's provisional proposals as part of the statutory public consultation process. Analysis of representations received.
- Seek Council views on aspects of representations and the impact they have on the provisional proposals as required.
- 12 weeks**

Stage 6: Full analysis of representations received by the Commission.

Commission determines where a need has arisen for local inquiries, organises and conducts inquiries and reviews its provisional recommendations in light of inquiry reports.

Publication of revised recommendations where the Commission makes significant changes to its provisional proposals.

Consider representations received within 1 month.

Move to final recommendation where possible.

20 weeks

Stage 7: Complete final recommendations for all Council areas.

Complete review process, write and submit reports.

27 weeks