



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland: Revised Recommendations
Date:	20th March, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services
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Relevant Background Information

The Committee will recall that the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner had on 18th September released his recommendations on the new Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland. He had proposed eleven Council areas, with sixty Wards and Councillors in Belfast and a total of forty in each of the remaining Council areas. The Commissioner had recommended that the boundary of the Belfast City Council Local Government District should reflect the City's natural setting within the surrounding hills, a number of landscape features and several major roads. He proposed that:

9 localities – Gilnahirk, Tullycarnet, Braniel, Castlereagh, Merok, Cregagh, Wynchurch, Glencregagh and Belvoir – be transferred from the current Castlereagh Borough Council area into Belfast;

6 localities – Colin Glen, Poleglass, Lagmore, Twinbrook, Kilwee and Dunmurray – be transferred from the existing Lisburn City Council area into Belfast; and

1 small area of housing at Knocknagoney be transferred from the existing North Down Borough Council area to Belfast.

The Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had agreed that responses to the Commissioner's provisional recommendations be left to the individual Political Parties.

However, subsequent to that meeting Council officers had reviewed the written submissions made by Castlereagh, Lisburn and North Down Councils and had spoken to the Party groups within the Council to seek approval for the Council to make representations at the public hearing in relation to those submissions. All the Party groups had agreed that it would be appropriate for the Council to be represented at the hearing and make a submission which highlighted the need for Belfast to retain a sufficient rate base to meet the needs of its citizens in terms of improvements in services and facilities and to rebut some of the submissions of the other Councils by reference to the legislative parameters within which the Commissioner should make his decision.

Key Issues

Current Position

Following the consultation period, the Commissioner has, on 27th February, issued Revised Recommendations.

The Commissioner has proposed to make no change in Belfast to the number of Wards or the names of Wards to those detailed in the Provisional Recommendations. However, he has made a small revision to the district boundary and the boundaries of Wards as set out below:

District Boundary

There will be an adjustment of the boundary between Belfast and Lisburn City and Castlereagh at Tullycarnet to reflect recent new developments on the ground.

Boundaries of Wards

- The Beechmount, Clonard and Falls Wards have been reconfigured and the proposed changes are based on readily identifiable boundaries;
- A number of changes have been made to the Falls Park, Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy Wards. The boundary between Ballymurphy and Falls Park will be the Whiterock Road rather than the Blackstaff River. To achieve electoral equality, a compensatory adjustment is required between Turf Lodge and Ballymurphy;
- The Ladybrook, Stewartstown, Shaw's Road and Andersonstown Wards have been changed to allow for more identifiable boundaries; and
- A number of houses will be transferred from the Forthriver Ward to the Ballygomartin Ward using the line of the river as the new boundary. This requires some compensatory alterations to the boundary of Forthriver with the Woodvale and Legoniel Wards.

A summary of the revised recommendations in so far as they relate to Belfast is appended and a copy, together with a report listing the streets in the City which are included in any particular Ward, will be made available to all Members of the Council in due course.

Next Stages

- the publication of this report commences a consultation period inviting written representations on the Revised Recommendations by Thursday, 9th April, 2009;
- when the Commissioner has decided on his final recommendations, he will submit a Final Report to the Department of the Environment by 30th June, 2009; and
- as soon as possible after the Commissioner submits his final report, the Department of the Environment will lay the report before the Assembly, together with a draft Order giving effect to the recommendations with or without modifications.

Resource Implications

There are no financial or Human Resource implications associated with this report.
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Recommendations

In line with its previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, the Committee is recommended to agree that responses to the Commissioner's Revised Recommendations be left to the individual Political Parties.

Documents Attached

Summary of Revised Recommendations relating to Belfast.

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