



Subject:	Local Government Boundary Commissioner – Provisional Recommendations
Date:	24th September, 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officers:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations which are out for public consultation and to seek retrospective approval for the attached Council response which was provisionally approved by Party Leaders Consultative Forum on 16th September. The Commissioner had invited written feedback and suggestions by 21st September.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of the attached report - approve retrospectively the response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner outlined at Appendix 2 (which has been provisionally approved by Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum) on 16th September.

	<p>- Officers make representations in line with this response on behalf of the Council at the public hearings scheduled for late September / early October</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>On 27th July 2021 the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland. These Provisional Recommendations will now be the subject of public consultation. The closing date for written feedback and suggestions about these proposals is 21st September 2021.</p> <p>The Commissioner’s office has indicated that the process is about independently ensuring electoral equality and fairness across Northern Ireland, with the aim that all the wards within a district should, as far as possible, have a similar number of electors. The Statutory Rules governing the review are set out in the Local Government Act (Northern) Ireland Act 1972, as amended.</p> <p>After the initial consultation period a series of 11 public hearings will be held in each council area facilitated by Assistant Commissioners. The public hearings, which will be subject to public health guidance at that time, will be held in late September and early October. To maximise public participation in the hearings, and to mitigate against any public health restrictions that may be in place, these events will be in a hybrid format allowing for both in person and online participation.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Previous Local Government Boundary Review - 2008</u></p> <p>The previous Local Government Boundary review took place in 2008. At that time the Final Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (Dick Mackenzie) included the placement of the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building within the new Belfast district boundary. However, the NI Executive made amendments to the Final Recommendations which resulted in Forestside and the adjacent Castlereagh Council Civic HQs remaining within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh council area.</p>
3.3	<p>Local Government Boundary Review (2021 – 2022)</p> <p>Provisional Recommendations – Belfast</p> <p>On 27 July the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>District Boundary – Belfast</p> <p>The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.</p>

	<p>Wards</p> <p>The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that Belfast district should remain comprised of 60 wards. The current electorate per ward (as at 4 January 2021) and proposed new electorate per ward are set out in the table at Appendix 1.</p> <p>There has been some alteration to ward boundaries to satisfy the legislative requirement for each ward within the district to have substantially the same number of electors. There is a total of 230236 electors within the district which averages at 3837 electors per ward and the recommended changes are designed to balance the electorate across the district.</p> <p>The ward boundary changes that have been proposed can be accessed by clicking: Belfast Wards</p>
3.4	<p>Belfast City Council Response (as provisionally approved by Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum on 16th September).</p> <p>Wards</p> <p>In line with previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, responses to the Commissioners recommendations in relation to ward boundaries will be left to individual parties. Parties are encouraged to examine the table at Appendix 1 and to review the map accessible at the link above.</p> <p>District Boundary</p> <p>Whilst the 2021 review recommends that the district boundary remains unchanged, Members will note that in 2008 the Final Recommendations recommended that the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building should reside within the new Belfast district boundary. However, the Council notes that the NI Executive did in fact amend the Final Recommendations of the Commissioner and included Forestside in the new LCCC district boundary.</p> <p>Given the LG Boundary Commissioner’s previous conclusions in respect of the Belfast district boundary, Members are asked to retrospectively approve the Belfast City Council response (attached at Appendix 2) asking the LG Boundary Commissioner to reassess the 2008 Final Recommendations with a view to placing the area containing Forestside within the Belfast district boundary as originally proposed in 2008.</p> <p>The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute ‘readily identifiable boundaries’ in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.</p>

	<p>The Council's response also highlights an issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary. The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans and request that the Commissioner, when considering any modification to the district boundary, may wish to take this into account also.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>No financial implications attached this report</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></p> <p>No good relations or equality implications attached to this report</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Table showing current electorate per ward (as at 4 January 2021) and proposed new electorate per ward</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Council response to the Local Government Boundary Commission Provisional Recommendations</p>