

Parish or Town Council Clerk

17 March 2009

Dear Sir or Madam,

Electoral review of the new County Durham Unitary Authority

The Boundary Committee for England has today commenced the first consultation stage of divisions in the electoral review of the new unitary authority in County Durham. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the review, and to seek your views.

The review aims to make sure, as far as possible, that every councillor in each division of the new Unitary Authority represents the same number of electors. The review will also take into account the identities and interests of local communities in the area.

The Committee has consulted on the proposed council size for the new council and has decided it should have 126 elected members. Consequently, proposals for division arrangements should be based on this. This consultation period seeking representations on electoral arrangements commences today and the Committee requests that any views you may have on new division arrangements should be submitted no later than **8 June 2009**. After this date, the Committee will not be in a position to accept further representations to feed into its draft recommendations.

We expect to publish our draft recommendations for County Durham later this summer. A twelve-week period of public consultation will follow this, during which time we would very much welcome your parish or town councils views on what is being proposed. Following this consultation period, the Boundary Committee will formulate its final recommendations and submit them to The Electoral Commission; it expects to do this in early 2010.

Please note that in the interests of transparency, copies of all representations we receive during this review will be placed on the Boundary Committee's website.

The Boundary Committee will make recommendations for the number of unitary authority councillors, the number and boundaries of divisions, and the names of divisions. The Committee can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils. The Committee cannot, as part of this review, consider changes to the external boundaries of a parish, or create new parishes. However, under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, changes to external parish boundaries will be able to be considered by the new County Durham Unitary Authority.

Your parish council's views on any aspect of the review would be very welcome. There are two particular issues for parish and town councils in an electoral review:

The Boundary Committee
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Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW

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First, we may make recommendations for parish and town council electoral arrangements: the total number of parish councillors for your parish; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of parish councillors for each ward.

Second, parish and town councils may wish to comment on the electoral arrangements for the new County Durham Unitary Authority. It is open to the Boundary Committee to put forward recommendations, for example in the interests of electoral equality, that parishes or parish wards be located in a specific electoral division of the new unitary authority. We may also recommend new parish warding arrangements to reflect the recommended warding arrangements for the new Authority.

In order to publicise the review a poster announcing the start of the review is enclosed. It would be much appreciated if you could put it on display on a notice board or similar, and we invite you to take any other steps you consider appropriate to bring the review to the attention of the public and other interested parties. This poster can also be downloaded from our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

A map of all parishes and unparished areas in County Durham, and the electorate figures for each area is available on our website. This information may be useful in formulating a proposed pattern of divisions for your local area. Our guidance is also available on the electoral reviews page of our website.

Any initial representations should be made to the Boundary Committee by **8 June 2009** to the address below:

County Durham Electoral Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW

As stated above, there will be a second period of public consultation on the Boundary Committee's draft recommendations for County Durham. We will contact you at that time to invite your views on what is being proposed.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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Review Officer

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