

Local Government Boundary Commission

em: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

10 December 2023

Dear Local Government Boundary Commission

Re: Council Size Submission - Warding Arrangements for Newcastle

As a perfect summary we have included the Motion which was submitted and debated in City Council on 6 December 2023. It was supported by Newcastle Independents and Chapel Independents but rejected by the two main political parties.

Councillor Marc Donnelly has been a councillor for nearly 20 years. Within this time the Council has shrunk in size considerably. We have a reduced workforce and more responsibility rests with the Leader, Deputy Leader and 6 Cabinet Members. The Council has systematically voted against moving back to a Committee structure, devolving power to back bench councillors. Instead it continues to operate under the Cabinet system where many delegated decisions are made and the responsibility rests with the few.

At the last Boundary Review in 2015 the former Leader of Council and then Opposition Leader Councillor, David Faulkner proposed to cut the number of councillors from 78 to 60. Other local Authorities such as Northumberland only have 61 elected members, single member wards and for a vast County the Council manages its business and functions well. As explained within the Motion to Council, 8 core cities in England have double the number of residents (those on the electoral roll) than Newcastle.

Whilst the Council has changed beyond recognition the only constant is the number of elected members. It cannot and should not be the case that this issue can not be looked at, bearing in mind a number of Boundary Reviews have taken place but councillor numbers have remained the same.

We have asked our residents who wish to be involved in this process. Sadly, the Council has not allowed this. We feel from engagement with our community that it is time for change. The Motion clearly sets out our view and we hope that the Boundary Commission will take this into account.

Motion to Council – submitted on 6 December 2023

Council notes that the Local Government Boundary Commission is reviewing warding arrangements in Newcastle and that the first stage of the review is the number of councillors required to run the city council.

Council further notes that:

Newcastle has a substantially lower number of residents per councillor than any of the 8 core cities in England, with Birmingham and Leeds having more than double the number of residents per councillor than Newcastle. To have the same ratio of councillors to residents as Liverpool and Manchester, Newcastle would need to reduce the number of councillors to 52;

Of the core cities, Nottingham is the closest in size to Newcastle. Despite having a population 8% higher than Newcastle, Nottingham runs its business with 28 fewer councillors;

Moving to an all-out system in Newcastle would remove the presumption of a uniform pattern of 3 member wards. Half of the 8 core cities in England have already moved to all out elections every 4 years reducing the cost of running elections;

Liverpool has recently moved to having all but 5 of its wards as single member wards, which was recommended by the Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council undertaken by Max Caller, resulting in a larger number of smaller wards and a much stronger link to each community;

The Local Government Boundary Commission does not propose to consult city residents on the number of councillors.

Council believes that:

- Residents should be invited to express views on the number of councillors in the city. This can be done through the Council's website, social media and press release, calling upon residents to decide how many elected members the Council should have;
- Newcastle could deliver its business with fewer councillors and the savings it delivers could be used to review remuneration for members and reinvest in council services;
- All out elections every four years would deliver greater stability for the council and reduce the cost of running local elections;
- Moving to single member wards has the potential to improve the accountability of each councillor to their electorate;
- A larger number of smaller wards will better reflect the communities that make up the city and deliver more meaningful ward level statistics.

Council resolves to consult residents of Newcastle on a recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission that Newcastle:

- Reduces its councillors from 78 to 52 to reduce the cost of politics;
- Creates single member wards wherever possible; and
- Moves to all out elections every four years.

Yours sincerely



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