

## Members' Library Service Request Form

Date of Document	03/06/15
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Document Title	Response to Local Government Boundary Commission Consultation

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East Lothian Council
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Additional information:

Authorised By	Jim Lamond
Designation	Head of Council Resources
Date	03/06/15

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**REPORT TO:** Members' Library Service

**MEETING DATE:**

**BY:** Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

**SUBJECT:** 5<sup>th</sup> Local Government Boundary Review

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform Councillors of the response submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on its proposals to reduce the number of councillors in East Lothian and its proposal to make changes to the current ward boundaries

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the terms of the response to the consultation.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At its meeting on 21 April the Council authorised officers to seek an extension of the time limit for responses to the latest consultation by the Local Government Boundary commission from 19<sup>th</sup> May until 24<sup>th</sup> June to enable a further report to be brought to Council on the proposed response. The extension was duly requested but agreement was only achieved for an extension until 29<sup>th</sup> May.
- 3.2 The Council had delegated authority to officers to submit a response on its behalf in event that the extension sought was refused.
- 3.3 The response attached as appendix 1 was accordingly submitted on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2015 expressing the Council's opposition to the proposals to reduce the number of councillors and to change the ward boundaries in the west of the County as currently proposed.
- 3.4 The Local Government Boundary Commission will now consider the responses it has received from Councils and it expects to start a public consultation in July that will last for a minimum of 12 weeks.

3.5 The internal working group will continue to meet to discuss any future action that it feels should be undertaken.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial - None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other - None

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Report to Council 21 April 2015

<b>AUTHOR'S NAME</b>	Kirstie MacNeill
<b>DESIGNATION</b>	Service Manager - Licensing, Administration and Democratic Services
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<b>DATE</b>	3/6/15

APPX 1



## East Lothian Council

**Sent by Email & 1<sup>st</sup> Class Post**

Our Ref : KMacN/AL/JMcN  
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Angela Leitch  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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29 May 2015

Ms Isabel Drummond-Murray  
Secretary  
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland  
Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
EDINBURGH  
EH12 5HD

Dear Ms Drummond-Murray,

### 5<sup>TH</sup> REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

In your communication of 19 March 2015, you asked for East Lothian Council's response to your proposals to reduce Councillor numbers and for changes to wards in its Council area. You originally asked for responses by 19 June 2015 but in my subsequent conversation with your colleague, Colin Wilson, he advised that as a result of the particular pressures caused by the General Election you would be happy to receive consultation responses by the end of May 2015.

East Lothian Council's response does not differ markedly from its response to the consultation on Councillor numbers last year. It remains opposed to the proposed reduction in the number of Councillors from 23 to 21 and the use of levels of deprivation as a determining factor, particularly since there is no evidence of any correlation between deprivation and Councillor workload and representation. At the time of that response, it was clear that the result of any reduction in Councillor numbers would lead to a radical redrawing of ward boundaries and it is the view of the Council that the ward boundaries now proposed actually have the opposite effect of what the Commission had intended to achieve, in that the western half of East Lothian that contains relatively greater levels of deprivation than the east will now be represented by one less electoral ward and two less Councillors.

The ward proposals also cut across long established local ties and school clusters and catchment areas that currently work well. This will present additional workload for Councillors who would find themselves having to attend two senior school PTAs and associated matters, whereas at present their wards match school clusters and catchment areas. This will mean that in Wards 2 and 3 there might be as many as eight Councillors present at such meetings.



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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

There is general concern that the workload of the Councillors in the most affected wards will increase disproportionately given the larger electorate and the larger number of community organisations they would have to work with. In addition, the proposals cut across our established Local Area Partnerships that reflect current ward areas. This will cause widespread disruption and inconvenience, not just for the Council but also for other organisations such as the Police, third sector and community-based groups who participate in the partnerships.

Not least, it should be noted that it will also be very difficult for local communities to understand and accept the proposed changes particularly in the communities of Wallyford and Macmerry who currently have very strong historical ties with the towns of Musselburgh and Tranent respectively. To now link Wallyford with Tranent and to sever Macmerry's ties with Tranent and link it with a predominantly coastal ward goes against logic and will be deeply unpopular amongst the affected electorate.

East Lothian Council, therefore, again calls on the Local Government Boundary Commission to drop its proposal to reduce the number of East Lothian Councillors from 23 to 21 and to thereby negate the resultant need to make any alterations to ward boundaries.

Yours sincerely



Angela Leitch  
Chief Executive