

REPORT TO: East Lothian Council

MEETING DATE: 25 August 2015

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Local Government Boundary Review

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (LGBC) proposals to reduce the number of councillors in East Lothian from 23 to 22 and its proposal to make changes to current ward boundaries in East Lothian.
- 1.2 To seek authority to respond to the consultation, opposing the proposal to reduce the number of Councillors and to change ward boundaries.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the LGBC's proposals to reduce councillor numbers in East Lothian from 23 to 22 and to change ward boundaries.
- 2.2 To authorise officers to submit a response to the LGBC consultation based on the draft shown in Appendix 1.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The current review of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland formally began on 21 February 2014. East Lothian Council responded to the consultation opposing the proposed reduction in councillor numbers in April 2014. The consultation was then opened to members of the public until August 2014 and a considerable number of citizens of East Lothian responded opposing the proposal.
- 3.2 When reviewing electoral arrangements the law requires the LGBC to take account of:
 - the interests of effective and convenient local government

- that each councillor should represent the same number of electors as nearly as may be
 - local ties that would be broken by making a particular boundary
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - special geographical considerations.
- 3.3 The LGBC considered the responses made to that consultation and produced another consultation paper re-asserting its proposal to reduce the number of East Lothian councillors from 23 to 21, representing three 3-member wards and three 4-member wards reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing councillor numbers by 2. The proposal was based on creating a single 4-member Musselburgh Ward by combining the Musselburgh West and Musselburgh East and Carberry Wards; moving Wallyford, Whitecraig and part of Inveresk from Musselburgh East and Carberry to the Fa'side Ward and moving Macmerry to the Preston/Seton/Gosford Ward.
- 3.4 The Council considered the LGBC's proposal on 21 April and agreed to submit a response based on the views expressed by the Council's cross-party LGBC Steering Group. The Group considered that the Council should maintain its opposition to the proposed reduction in the number of councillors and in particular express concern that the workload of councillors in the wards most affected by the proposed boundary changes would increase given the larger electorate and the larger number of community organisations they would be expected to work with. The group was also concerned that the new ward boundaries proposed by the LGBC cut across existing high school catchment areas and severed a number of long-standing local ties.
- 3.5 The LGBC published its response to that consultation exercise on 20 July 2015 and launched a public consultation exercise on its latest proposals on 30 July 2015. The deadline for responses to the latest consultation is 22 October 2015.
- 3.6 The LGBC's latest proposal is to cut the number of East Lothian councillors from 23 to 22. It proposes to accommodate this reduction in councillor numbers by creating a single 4-member Musselburgh Ward; moving Wallyford and Whitecraig to a new Tranent, Wallyford and Macmerry Ward; moving Ormiston and Pencailand to the Haddington and Lammermuir Ward and increasing the number of councillors in this ward from 3 to 4. It is proposing that the boundaries and number of elected members for the other three wards would remain unchanged.
- 3.7 The LGBC asserted that these proposals:
- allow for the maintenance of local community ties;
 - improve overall forecast parity and address forecast disparities in existing ward 1 (Musselburgh West);

- place Musselburgh in a single ward to improve local community ties.
- 3.8 The map showing the proposed changes to ward boundaries in East Lothian is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.9 It is worth noting that the new ward boundaries now being proposed to accommodate the reduction in number of councillors from 23 to 22 did not form part of the consultation with the Council that took place earlier this year.
- 3.10 The publication of the latest proposals marks the start of a 12-week statutory public consultation on the proposed ward boundaries. This is designed primarily for the public, but the Council can also make a submission.
- 3.11 The substantive objections made previously by the Council against any reduction in the number of East Lothian Councillors remain valid, in particular since the Council is aware that the population of East Lothian is forecast to grow quite substantially over the next few years. It is very likely that the reduction in councillor numbers arising from this review will almost certainly need to be reversed at the next review.
- 3.12 Therefore it is recommended that the Council submit a response based on the draft shown in Appendix 1.

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, 22 April 2014 – Boundary Commission Review: Response to Statutory Consultation

- 7.2 Report to Council, 21 April 2015 – Local Government Boundary Review
- 7.3 Members Library Services report, 3 June 2015 – 5th Local Government Boundary Review
- 7.4 Correspondence from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, 20 July 2015

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Appendix 1: Draft Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Why cut East Lothian Councillor numbers by 1?

The Boundary Commission claims to have taken account of the Council's response to the previous consultation when the Commission proposed to cut the number of councillors from 23 to 21. Yes a cut to 22 is preferable to the proposal cut to 21 but the Council's arguments against any cut in our councillor numbers are all still valid.

East Lothian made the largest number of responses to the previous consultation and the responses were overwhelmingly against any cut in councillor numbers.

The Commission has not given any justification for the cut and has not presented any benefits.

The cut in East Lothian councillors by one is not required to allow for increases in councillor numbers elsewhere since the Commission's proposals across the whole of Scotland actually reduce the number of councillors.

The amount of disruption and the expense involved in re-drawing boundaries to accommodate the cut of one councillor has to be taken into account. Examples of the cost of the change include the need to change the electoral registers, redraw all the maps and the staff time involved in re-establishing three new Area Partnerships. This does not take account of the cost of the consultation that the Commission is now undertaking and of a possible public enquiry.

The creation of the six Area Partnerships is proving to be successful in giving communities a stronger voice and the ability to plan for their own needs and priorities. They are just about to start consulting on draft Area Plans and proposals to spend their devolved budgets. The Commission's proposal means we would have to re-draw the boundaries and membership of three Area Partnerships and start again.

Why cut councillor numbers when our population is growing and will continue to grow?

It is illogical to cut East Lothian's councillors at a time when our population is growing and will continue to grow.

The Commission has taken no account of the major new housing developments that are just about to start – Wallyford and Letham Mains – and of the proposals for even more new housing that will form a key part of the Local Development Plan which will be published soon.

Between 2003 – 2013 our population grew by just over 10,000 (11%) and it is projected to grow by around 1% a year for the next 25 years – the fourth fastest rate of growth of any area in Scotland - behind Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross.

It makes no sense to go to the expense and suffer the disruption of cutting one councillor when the next review will need to increase the number of councillors.

Breaking community ties

The Commission's imperative to deal with 'forecast disparities' means that they have totally failed to take account of reality and life in our communities.

The Commission has claimed that its proposal allows for the 'maintenance of community ties'. But the new ward boundaries it proposes to accommodate the cut in councillors will break important community ties.

Creating a single Musselburgh Ward abolishes the divide between Musselburgh West and East – but by doing this the Commission have weakened community ties between some communities and their closest town.

Creating the single Area Partnership for the two Musselburgh wards takes account of the need to cement the community ties between East and West Musselburgh but also reflects the ties between the communities on the outskirts of Musselburgh – Wallyford and Whitecraig – and the town; links that would be broken if the Commission has its way.

Moving Wallyford and Whitecraig from the Musselburgh East and Carberry ward to the new Tranent Ward makes no sense since these two communities have much closer ties with Musselburgh than with Tranent. People from these communities are far more likely to shop and socialise in Musselburgh than Tranent. The children from these communities go to Musselburgh Grammar, not Ross High.

To accommodate the cut in the number of councillors through merging Musselburgh West and Musselburgh East and Carberry wards the Commission has had to move Wallyford and Whitecraig to the Tranent ward. Since they cannot increase the number of councillors in the Tranent Ward (it is already at the maximum of 4) they have had to move Ormiston and Pencaitland to the Haddington Ward. (The Commission had previously proposed moving Macmerry from the Tranent ward to the Preston Seton Gosford Ward but have backed off from that idea and have now settled on an equally bad proposal.) Ormiston has no real link to Haddington. Its ties are clearly with Tranent.

The new Musselburgh and Tranent ward boundaries also cut across the Holyrood Parliament boundaries. Currently, Musselburgh West and Musselburgh East and Carberry wards are totally within the North Midlothian and Musselburgh constituency. Under the LGBC's proposal the whole of the new Musselburgh ward and Wallyford and Whitecraig part of the new Tranent ward will be in this constituency whilst the remaining part of the Tranent ward would be in the East Lothian constituency.

Increasing Councillors' workload

How does cutting the number of councillors improve the council's capacity to deal with the issues caused by the growing population, increased demand for services, the need to grow our economy and to reduce inequality, and the growing complexity of the public sector such as the new Integrated Joint Board for health and social care, increased local scrutiny of police and fire services?

At a time when the number of constituents is growing, problems faced by constituents continues to grow and the demand on councils and councillors from the Scottish Government is growing, cutting the number of councillors will only increase the workload on councillors.

The Commission seems to have dropped its notion that the number of councillors should be determined, at least in part, by levels of deprivation. The proposal to move Wallyford and Whitecraig to Tranent actually goes against the Commission's previously stated aim of trying to take account of deprivation in councillors' workload.

They are moving two communities with relatively high levels of deprivation into the ward which already has the highest level of deprivation (measured by unemployment, benefits recipients, health inequality and other factors such as housing and crime).

Replacing Ormiston and Pencaitland – two areas with relatively low levels of deprivation – with Wallyford and Whitecraig, will give the new Tranent Ward a higher level of relative deprivation than the existing Fa'side ward. The four councillors in the new Tranent ward would have to represent a greater number of areas with high levels of deprivation.

The creation of the new Tranent ward and the expanded Haddington and Lammermuir Ward will create significant disparity in workload between councillors across the county.

The four Musselburgh councillors will have one Community Council and one Secondary School.

The four Tranent councillors will have four Community Councils – Tranent & Elphinstone, Wallyford, Whitecraig and Macmerry & Gladsmuir – and two Secondary Schools.

The four Haddington and Lammermuir Councillors will have six Community Councils – Haddington, Garvald & Morham, Gifford, Pencaitland, Ormiston and Humble, East & West Saltoun & Bolton – and also two Secondary Schools.

Similar disparities also exist in relation to the number of primary schools, Tenants & Residents Associations and other community organisations.

The new ward boundaries would mean that the Musselburgh Grammar and Ross High Parent Councils would each have eight councillors eligible to attend.

The new Haddington ward will cover almost half of East Lothian. It will stretch from Johnsleugh on the edge of the Lammermuirs in the east to Ormiston in the west (a 40 minutes drive) and from Blegbie in the south to Athelstaneford in the north (30 minutes).

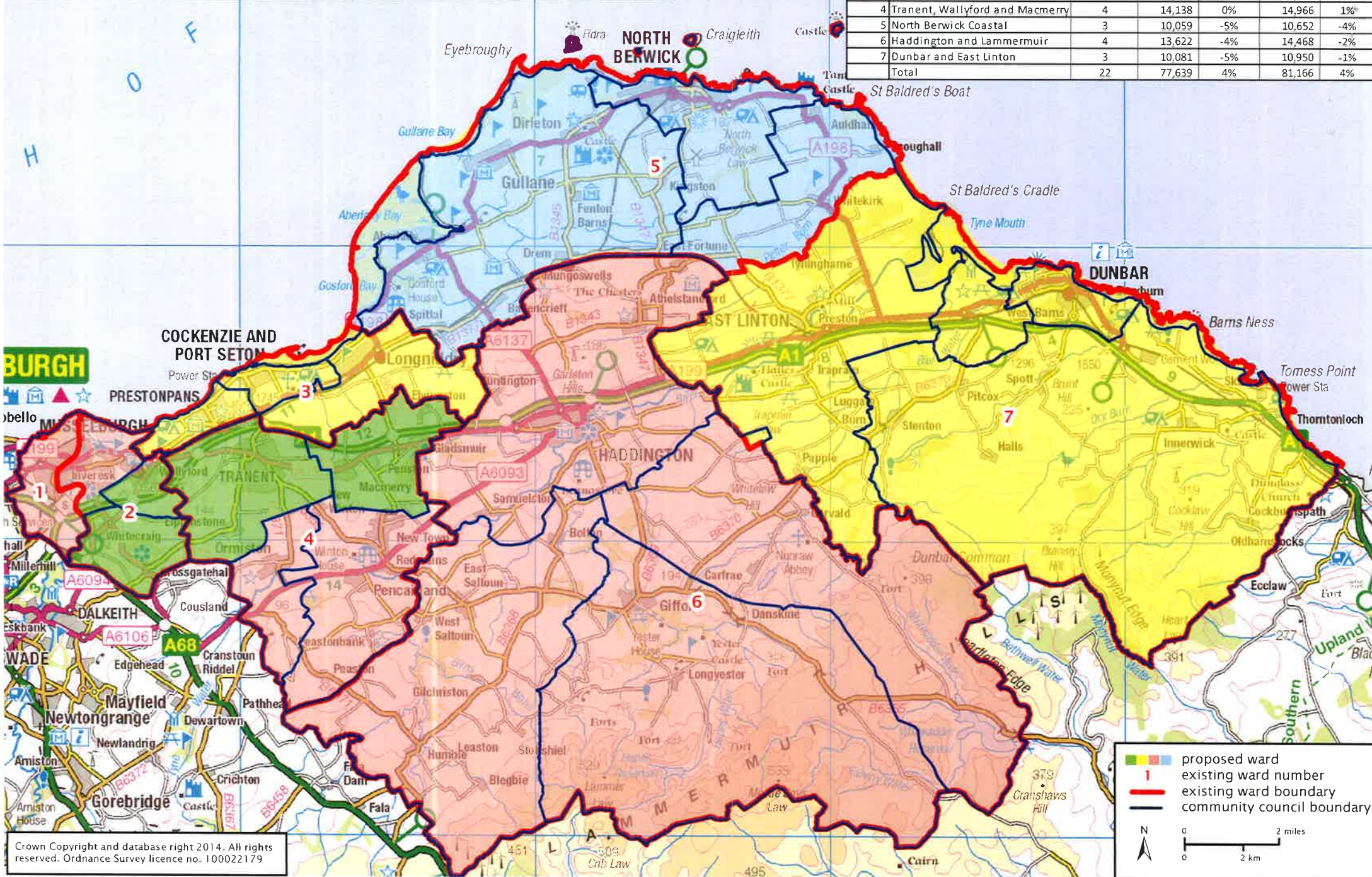
The West of the County which has the highest levels and greater concentration of deprivation is currently served by 14 councillors in 4 wards – Musselburgh West (3), Musselburgh East (3), Fa'side (4), and PSG (4); and the East has 9 councillors in three wards – Haddington (3), Dunbar & East Linton (3), and North Berwick (3).

Under the Commission's proposals the West of the county will lose a ward and lose 2 councillors – a 15% cut - whilst the three wards in the East will gain a councillor.

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 5th Statutory Review of Electoral Arrangements
 East Lothian council area - Option C

LGBCS Paper 2266
 Appendix F

Ward No	Ward Name	Councillors	Electorate Sept 13	Actual Disparity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Disparity
1	Musselburgh	4	15,658	11%	16,135	9%
2						
3	Preston / Seton / Gosford	4	14,081	0%	13,995	-5%
4	Tranent, Wallyford and Macmerry	4	14,138	0%	14,966	1%
5	North Berwick Coastal	3	10,059	-5%	10,652	-4%
6	Haddington and Lammermuir	4	13,622	-4%	14,468	-2%
7	Dunbar and East Linton	3	10,081	-5%	10,950	-1%
	Total	22	77,639	4%	81,166	4%



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