

Mr Mark Rogers
Chief Executive
Birmingham City Council
Council House
Victoria Square
Birmingham B1 1BB

21 July 2015

Dear Mr Rogers,

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF BIRMINGHAM

I am writing to inform you that the Commission has, today, opened its consultation inviting proposals for a new pattern of electoral wards for Birmingham City Council.

As you are aware, the Commission decided to conduct its electoral review following publication of Sir Bob Kerslake's (now Lord Kerslake) report on the governance and organisational capabilities of Birmingham City Council. The report recommended that an electoral review should be conducted 'to help the council produce an effective model of representative governance.'

The Commission has considered evidence from a range of sources on the way the council takes decisions, how decision makers and local bodies are scrutinised and the representational role of councillors in the community. Critically, we also looked at how the council needs to change so that the number of councillors will be right for the city after the Commission has completed its work.

We received evidence supporting different council sizes for Birmingham. These included submissions from the City Council proposing to retain the current council size, a submission from the Conservative Group and also a submission from the Leader and Executive suggesting how the Council could operate with 100 councillors in the future.

Based on all the evidence, the Commission is minded to recommend that 100 city councillors should be elected to Birmingham City Council from 2018. After considering the evidence presented to it, the Commission believes that a 100-councillor model for Birmingham will help the council address the failings of the past, reflect the process of change which is already underway and will help it achieve its ambitions for the future.

The Commission now invites proposals from the council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral wards to accommodate those councillors.

As the Council now elects by whole council elections it means that the Council, respondents and the Commission are free to draw up a pattern of wards that elect one-, two- or three-councillors. Those intending to make a submission on a prospective warding pattern should be advised that, on the basis of the evidence already available, any three-member wards proposed would need to be individually and specifically evidenced by reference to the statutory criteria (see below).

The consultation begins today and will end on 28 September 2015.

Publicising the review

I would be grateful if you could bring the consultation to the attention of elected members. Furthermore, a copy of the Commission's press release and posters advertising this stage of the review are being sent to your Council. It would be much appreciated if you could publicise the consultation by arranging for copies to be placed on display at local information points, and by taking such other steps as you consider appropriate to bring the review to the attention of the public and other interested parties. In particular, we would appreciate it if you could promote the consultation online, via social media and any other channels you would normally use to engage residents.

Further details about the review are available on our website at www.lqbce.org.uk where there is information about how to get involved and the kind of evidence the Commission is seeking in support of any proposed division patterns.

In addition, the Commission's consultation portal allows visitors to interact with online maps of the current electoral wards, draw their own boundaries and feed views into the consultation process directly. The portal is available at www.consultation.lqbce.org.uk.

Submissions can also be made by email to reviews@lqbce.org.uk and by post to the address at the end of this letter.

Review timetable

This phase of consultation closes on **28 September 2015**.

Once the Commission has considered all the proposals received during this phase of consultation, it plans to publish draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements in December 2015. Public consultation on the draft recommendations is scheduled to take place between December 2015 and

February 2016. Once the Commission has considered the representations and evidence as part of that consultation, it intends to publish final recommendations in May 2016.

New electoral arrangements for the city are scheduled to come into effect at the city council elections in 2018.

Creating a pattern of wards

In drawing up a pattern of electoral wards, the Commission must balance its three statutory criteria, namely:

- To deliver electoral equality where each city councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the city.
- That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities.
- That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

The Commission will test proposals against the criteria before drawing up draft recommendations. Accordingly, all proposals should demonstrate how they meet the three requirements. The Commission will take decisions based on the strength of the evidence presented to it and not merely on assertion. For example, details of community interests such as the location and use made of local facilities, services and local organisations demonstrating how a community manifests itself will carry greater weight than submissions that simply asserting the that an area has community identity.

As outlined earlier, if you intend to propose one or more three-member wards, you are advised to do so with specific reference to the statutory criteria (listed above). Evidence presented to the Commission during its consideration of council size raised issues in relation to local accountability delivered under the existing three-member ward pattern. The Commission would therefore expect proposals for new three-member wards to be supported by evidence under the statutory criteria.

The Commission will consider all submissions on their merit. A well-evidenced submission from an individual which addresses the three statutory criteria will be more persuasive than one which does not, even if the latter is from an elected individual or body.

Further information on drawing up a pattern of electoral wards is available in our guidance document: *Electoral reviews: technical guidance* which can be found at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/guidance>. We also publish a practical guide for putting forward submissions called *How to propose a pattern of wards* which is available at http://www.lgbce.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/10409/proposing-new-

[wards-guidance.pdf](#).

Our website includes information about previous electoral reviews of city councils where you can see how the Commission came to its conclusions and how other counties, districts and parishes built their own pattern of wards.

Please feel free to contact us at any time should you have any questions. Officers at the Commission will be happy to assist with technical aspects of your division scheme either in person or via email or telephone.

Correspondence and enquiries

Correspondence relating to this review should be addressed to:

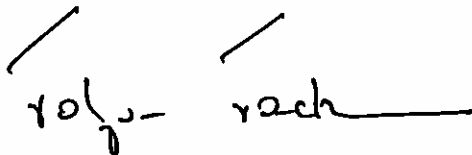
Review Officer (Birmingham)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP

or direct to your main contacts at the Commission who will be:

- Mark Pascoe, Review Officer, with specific responsibility for the day-to-day running of the review
email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk; tel: 0330 500 1278;
- Tim Bowden, Review Manager, who leads the team dealing with this and other reviews
email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk; tel: 0330 500 1270.

I am copying this letter to the organisations and individuals listed below.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Jolyon Jackson, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'J' followed by a horizontal line.

Jolyon Jackson CBE
Chief Executive
jolyon.jackson@lgbce.org.uk
0330 500 1525

cc MPs and MEPs with constituency interests in Birmingham
 West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner
 University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
 West Midlands Fire Service
 Local organisations in Birmingham