

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Executive

Council: 28 June 2006

Subject: Local Government Boundary Review

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report provides an update on progress with the Local Government Boundary Review for West Dunbartonshire and proposes actions to be taken to progress the designation of polling districts.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland published revised proposals for West Dunbartonshire's boundaries in July 2005. The Council, on 31 August 2005, considered those proposals and submitted alternatives.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The next step is for the Local Government Boundaries Commission to issue final recommendations. Once these final recommendations are issued, they are submitted to Scottish Ministers and a period of six weeks must elapse before they can be signed. The final recommendations for 22 Councils have now been published, but 10 still remain to be decided. The Commission has indicated that the final recommendations for this area will not be published until July this year. This means that it may be September or even October before they become law.
- 3.2** The Commission will supply the Council with copies of the plan to display in local offices and libraries during the six week period when the proposals are awaiting Ministerial approval. There is no formal consultation period during this time, however, members or others could make representations to Ministers to consider when approving the recommendations, so there is some potential for change.
- 3.3** August was always the indicative date for the completion of the reviews, so the Commission is operating within its given timescale. However, the timing of West Dunbartonshire's review causes significant practical difficulties.
- 3.4** The new wards must be divided into polling districts. These districts should be cohesive units, built around convenient, suitable polling places, to make going to the polls as easy as possible for electors. The designation of these polling districts cannot be done in advance of having the final recommendations. This is further complicated by the possibility of changes

to boundaries during the six week period during which the proposals await Ministerial approval.

- 3.5** The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board has indicated that his deadline for receiving polling district boundaries for inclusion in the new electoral register is 25 August. In the light of the information from the Local Government Boundaries Commission, this does not look like an achievable timescale, given that the polling districts require Council approval.
- 3.6** It will be necessary for the Council to devise a way of speeding up the consideration and designation of polling districts. The Working Group on the Local Boundary Review and the Single Transferable Vote would be an appropriate forum to discuss the issues arising.

4. Personnel Implications

- 4.1** The timing of the issue and approval of the final recommendations will increase workload on officers, both within the Planning Section and the Chief Executive's Department. This could deflect attention from preparations for the 2007 polls and the new working arrangements for multi-member wards.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial implications.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1** It is recommended as follows:-
- (a) that the Council note the timescale for the completion of final recommendations for its boundaries.
 - (b) that the Council delegate the consideration and designation of polling districts to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Working Group on Local Government Boundaries and the Single Transferable Vote; and
 - (c) that the Chief Executive agrees an achievable timescale for the notification of polling district boundaries with the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer of the Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board.

Tim Huntingford
Chief Executive

Background papers:

Letter from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland: 6 September 2004

Letter from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland: 8 March 2005
Report by the Chief Executive to West Dunbartonshire Council – 27 April 2005 and minute thereof.

Letter from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland: 1 July 2005
Report by the Chief Executive to Council on 31 August 2005 and minute thereof

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Wards Affected: All wards