

Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

Second Consultation Stage

Response from Lewisham Council on submissions and counter proposals

On behalf of Lewisham Council the election committee would like to thank the BCE for their proposals and the opportunities to submit our own proposals and pass comment on submissions from others. We have reviewed all submissions relating to constituencies within and neighbouring the London Borough of Lewisham and have the following comments:

1. We consider the counter proposals from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat Parties to be the most complete submissions in terms of covering the whole of the sub-region and for applying the strict requirements of the review
2. In particular we have found the Labour proposals to be the strongest of the 3 in terms of applying the requirements of the review within Lewisham
 - a. This proposal enables the greatest number of wards to remain with wards from their existing constituency – i.e. there is less movement on wards in this proposal than any other
 - b. The addition of the 3 Dulwich wards to west Lewisham produces a more consistent constituency with more natural fitting communities than the initial proposals
 - c. The Greenwich and Deptford BC in the initial proposals placed 2 broad areas together that are not natural ‘partners’. In the Labour counter proposals both these areas are partnered with areas that are more similar in terms of geography, demographics and communities, and more accessible to each-other
 - d. The solutions in these proposals for issues outside of Lewisham are the more complete and nuanced approach of any submission – e.g. resolving the issue of 6 different constituencies in Lambeth, and restoring ‘orphan’ wards
 - e. The solution for the Dulwich wards helps provide balance to the entire South London region, improving the shape and accessibility of many surrounding constituencies and beyond
 - f. Because of these reasons we urge the BCE to consider the Labour proposals favourably when making their final proposals
3. Submissions from residents tend to focus on 3 themes – a) suspicions about the motives for the review; b) the use of the 1.12.15 electoral register statistics (which we will mention below) and; c) local ties between wards/boroughs
4. The view of residents seems strongest regarding the wards in the Blackheath area, and the Penge and Cator ward
5. The various submissions regarding Blackheath tend to give support to the initial proposals from the BCE and the counter proposals from Labour – keeping certain wards in the area together, notably Blackheath, Lee Green and Grove Park
6. In the case of Penge and Cator ward the submissions are not conclusive – several submissions are against the proposals for placing this ward within a mainly Beckenham constituency, whilst others give their support

Finally, on the issue on the use of the 1.12.15 register statistics. We are aware that this was not the choice of the BCE but part of the legislation. We would like to again raise our objections to the use of these figures as the basis for the review on the following grounds:

- A. 1.12.15 was the starting date for the new system of registration, which saw many thousands of people removed from the register due to a failure to register under the old system. This reduction was seen more keenly in inner city areas, and especially so in Lewisham
- B. Clearly this means the figures were inaccurate. Lewisham has historically seen a low electoral registration rate in December and had particular challenges with introducing the new system of electoral registration – the evidence shows our registration figures on 1.12.15 were significantly low
- C. The Electoral Commission recommended the transition be delayed until 1.12.16 for these reasons – the government ignored that advice
- D. Registrations to vote in Lewisham increased by 18.6% after 1.12.15, which was top of the league table in elector growth. London saw the largest regional growth with 7%. This is a clear illustration that the figures used for the review have already led to a unequal distribution of new constituencies throughout the regions – *the very problem this review is trying to solve*
- E. The electoral figures for London published on 1.12.16 show the London-wide parliamentary electorate has increased by over 250,000 since 1.12.15 – more than 3 times the electorate quota used in this review for maximum constituency size
- F. Further development and population growth continues apace in Lewisham, as in many other parts of London. London Councils and ONS estimates for population growth show that London’s population, and electorate, will increase faster than anywhere else in the UK
- G. The disparity with other regions in the UK will be significantly higher when the new constituencies come into force in May 2020, and will continue to grow thereafter

Thank you once again for the opportunities to contribute to the review and we look forward to seeing the final proposals from the BCE.

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On behalf of the Elections Committee, London Borough of Lewisham