

Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

Final Consultation Stage

Response from Lewisham Council

On behalf of Lewisham Council the election committee would like to thank the BCE for their proposals and the opportunities to submit our response. We have the following comments:

1. There doesn't appear to be any response or consideration made to comments from local authorities in the BCE report. There are no references to local authorities or returning officers at any point.
2. We are broadly in support of the final proposals and agree that they meet the relevant criteria for the review.
3. Greenwich and Deptford BC. We repeat our comments from the previous consultation phase that this constituency places together 2 areas that are not natural partners. Deptford is a more natural partner to Catford, with the 2 Greenwich wards fitting better with the areas of Blackheath down to Grove Park, Whitefoot and Downham.
4. Dulwich and Sydenham BC. This constituency is a significant improvement from the initial proposals. It is unfortunate that Crofton Park cannot be placed with Ladywell, Brockley and Telegraph Hill but this still represents a good solution for Lewisham residents.
5. Lewisham and Catford BC. The majority of this constituency is from the old Lewisham East constituency. If both Blackheath and Lee Green wards were placed in this constituency instead of Ladywell and Lewisham Central then the whole of the old Lewisham East constituency would be in one single new constituency. This was referenced in the BCE report but it is not clear why this solution was not chosen.

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.

Barry Quirk
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On behalf of the London Borough of Lewisham