

North Lincolnshire Council

Electoral Review

Stage Two – Warding Arrangements

Submission to the Local Government Boundary
Commission for England

(July 2021)

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Section 1

Overview of Submission

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the Borough of North Lincolnshire's local government electoral arrangements. The outcome of the review will be implemented for the May 2023 Council elections.

The review is in two stages. The preliminary stage was concerned with determining "Council Size" in terms of the number of Councillors. Having identified the size, the next stage is concerned with determining the warding arrangements in terms of the number, their size, and the number of representatives in each.

The Council welcomes the review and the opportunity to submit its preferred option to the Commission. This report, which has been directed by a working party of the Council's Elected Member Periodic Electoral Review Working Group and approved by the full Borough Council at its meeting on 26 July 2021, contains the Council's response to the second stage – warding arrangements. An extract of the copy of the draft minutes of the council meeting making this decision is included as an appendix to this submission.

The Council welcomes the outcome of the first phase of the electoral review that the LGBCE is minded to accept the proposal for the Council to continue to comprise forth three councillors for the Borough of North Lincolnshire and has worked on this as the basis of our warding proposals.

Scope of Review

The review being undertaken by the Boundary Commission covers the entire area of the Borough of North Lincolnshire.

In making its proposals, the Boundary Commission will apply the following statutory criteria making its proposals:

- The need to secure electoral equality (a consistent number of electors per Councillor)
- Community identity (strong ward boundaries that reflect communities); and
- Securing effective and convenient local government (coherent wards)

The review was initiated in July 2020 and dealt first with the preliminary stage which was to determine the future size of the Council (specifically the number of elected Councillors who will form the Council from 2023). This phase was completed in February 2021.

The second phase which looks at warding arrangements commenced in earnest in May 2021 and concluded in July 2021 when a final position was determined by the Council for submission to the Boundary Commission.

In this part of the process, the Council was required to identify proposals for ward boundaries (and associated relevant considerations such as the number of wards and the number of members within each) which complied with three criteria used by the Boundary Commission (previously stated). These will then be submitted to the Commission which will consult on the proposals received.

A timetable of events for the whole review can be found in Appendix 1.

The submission starts with a profile of the Borough of North Lincolnshire, and then identifies the thinking underpinning the proposals contained within it. It also includes maps of the current boundaries, and the newly proposed boundaries.

It then concludes with a detailed explanation of the reasoning behind the proposals for each specific ward, including its suggested name.

Whilst Council Officers have been supporting Members with this submission, particularly in relation to elector equality considerations, the overall process has been member driven, based on their local geographic and community knowledge as ward councillors.

Background

The changes arising from the last electoral review in North Lincolnshire were implemented at the 2003 local government elections. On that occasion, the Commission's final recommendations for future electoral arrangements, were that North Lincolnshire should increase its number of councillors from 42 to 43, and create a new electoral ward named Burringham and Gunness.

The Council, as part of the 2020-21 review, had proposed that the size of the council in terms of councillors should stay the same, and this position has been used as part of the thinking behind phase two of the process.

The requirement for a review, and the associated criteria set by the Boundary Commission to do so, has allowed the Council to reflect on how the Council has changed in the last twenty years and to ensure that its new ward boundaries reflected demographic shifts, community changes, building development and even changes to natural boundaries. These observations, many provided by ward councillors who had the greatest intimate knowledge of the geography and communities in the borough, have underpinned the proposals in this submission.

Whilst growth both in terms of development and communities was strong in some areas of the borough, this was not necessarily true in every case, with some wards having achieved a form of suburban maturity and with it, less flux in elector numbers. This meant that whilst significant change was needed in some areas, e.g., the current Ridge ward, this was not the case in others. The proposals in this report reflect this.

Fortunately, technology has moved on significantly in the twenty years since the last review, and the Borough is proud to have been in the vanguard of pioneering new software, which gave flexibility to the organisation to produce different models and options, at borough and ward levels.

It also allowed the Council to address the issue of electoral equality with precision and ensure that the proposals in this submission meet this criterion with great accuracy. The Council has been able to propose 16 wards for the Borough, all of which fall around or below the thirteen % plus or minus variation from complete equality.

Historic Considerations

The towns and villages that go to make up the Borough of North Lincolnshire all have their own identities with long histories. The main clearly distinguished areas are:

- Ashby
- Barton
- Belton
- Burton-upon-Stather
- Bottesford
- Brigg
- Broughton
- Crowle
- Epworth
- Hibaldstow
- Kirton-in-Lindsey
- Messingham
- Scawby
- Scunthorpe
- Winterton

We also have distinctive shopping Centres:

Barton High Street
Brigg High Street
Epworth High Street
Scunthorpe High Street and out of town retail parks

All the above are clear distinctive communities, with areas of community focus, which are reflected in this submission.

Naming Conventions

Members are aware that the current ward names and boundaries have been in place for twenty years and so are well known and understood by residents, and these in turn underpin the five distinct areas of the Authority area, which are Scunthorpe North, Scunthorpe South, Isle of Axholme, Barton and Brigg and District.

As such, the Council has been keen to preserve well known and historically rooted ward names wherever possible. It is considered that this will help any changes seem organic and encourage resident acceptance of the new warding arrangements.

However, in some cases this has not been possible or suitable. Consequently, there are seven proposed ward name changes, with a further two wards (Axholme North and Axholme South changing fundamentally) as follows:

- Axholme North
- Axholme South
- Ashby and Lakeside
- Bottesford and Yaddlethorpe
- Broughton and Scawby
- Burringham, Gunness and Skippingdale
- Old Brumby and Kingsway
- Scunthorpe West
- Town and University

The council is proposing that the Isle of Axholme be split into two wards as opposed to the current three. This allows for fairer electoral equality and also addresses the previous parliamentary review which recommends the deletion of the former Axholme North ward from the rest of the Isle.

In the case of the Ashby and Lakeside and Bottesford and Yaddlethorpe, the addition to the original ward name simply reflects the prominent communities in the locality. Lakeside is a large housing development within the Ashby ward so has been added to the Ashby name. Similarly, Yaddlethorpe makes up almost a quarter of the Bottesford ward. Therefore, the community has been included with the Bottesford ward name.

The Appleby Parish and the Roxby Parish has been removed from the Broughton ward and included with Burton-upon-Stather and Winterton. Both of these communities look more naturally to Winterton than Broughton.

Scawby has been put into Broughton because part of Scawby Brook was already in the Broughton ward, and so therefore the rest of Scawby Brook, which in in Scawby Parish is better suited to a Broughton and Scawby arrangement. It should also be noted that Broughton and Scawby are also connected through two smaller villages of Castlethorpe and Wressle.

Skippingdale is a well established and defined area of Scunthorpe. It forms a significant part of that sub-geographic area and should be recognised in the ward name. In addition, the new proposal supports the current school catchment area.

Old Brumby and Kingsway is a new ward. Old Brumby is a major service area for the Old Brumby and Kingsway ward and therefore needs to be recognised in the new ward structure.

Kingsway is the arterial that encompasses and is where a significant part of the community resides and associate with.

Scunthorpe West is the new name for the areas that represent the Brumby and Riddings/Westcliff area of the town of Scunthorpe.

This consolidates two historically established residential areas with a strong identity in one area comprising the Riddings and Westcliff estates. Scunthorpe West now comprises Enderby Road, Willoughby Road and Manor Farm.

Town and University is the new name for the former Town Ward. The polling districts that formed the Town Ward remain, as well as the addition of the Brumby Wood Lane area. The new ward reflects the innovative regeneration programme that is currently underway, encompassing the new university campus that now sits within this new ward.

Following the creation of the University in 2019 it is expected that this ward will grow in the future.

Summary of Proposals

In conclusion, the Council has taken great care in considering options for the future warding arrangements for the Borough of North Lincolnshire. It has been mindful of the three criteria to be considered when identifying changes and has given its reasons against each of these criteria for each ward detailed below.

In short, it wishes to create 16 wards, with eleven wards represented by three councillors and five wards represented by two councillors. It also removes the one-member ward as expressed in the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance. This retains 43 councillors overall.

It is the Council's belief that the proposals in this submission would be the best and most sensible way of operating a ward-based democracy in the Borough in the future from 2023.

Section 2 – Borough Profile

North Lincolnshire's landscape and settlements

North Lincolnshire is characterised by a variety of landscapes ranging from the clay pits of the Humber Estuary, the rolling chalk escarpment of the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Ancholme Valley, the Lincoln Edge, the Trent Valley, and the Isle of Axholme. There are also over 128 miles of estuary and rivers in North Lincolnshire.

The settlement pattern of North Lincolnshire has been highly influenced by the topography of the area: the River Trent and its flood plain; the network of low hills on the Isle of Axholme; the River Ancholme and its valley; the Lincolnshire Wolds; and the Humber Estuary. Such characteristics have important implications for the way in which settlements function and the relationships that become established between different settlements.

The North Lincolnshire Settlement Survey (2019 Revision) identifies that there are 86 separate settlements in North Lincolnshire spread over an area measuring 859 square kilometres. It is a predominantly rural area made up of several historic market towns: Barton upon Humber; Brigg; Crowle; Epworth; Kirton in Lindsey; and Winterton. These towns are surrounded by countryside with many villages of various sizes and hamlets. Scunthorpe is the largest urban area and is the focus for education, jobs, retail, services, and industry.

Natural environment

North Lincolnshire is home to a variety of ecologically important wildlife habitats ranging from the internationally important areas of the Humber Estuary and Crowle Moors, through to nationally, regionally, and locally important wildlife and geological sites. These sites include five international designations (one Ramsar site, two Special Areas of Conservation and two Special Protection Areas), two National Nature Reserves (NNRs), 29 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's), 14 Local Nature Reserves (LNR's), 215 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), and 37 Local Geological Sites (LGS).

North Lincolnshire is actively seeking the extension of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) into the area to further protect our most valued landscapes.

Built environment

North Lincolnshire also has numerous heritage assets including 912 Listed Buildings (39 Grade I; 36 Grade II*; 837 Grade II), 17 Conservation Areas and 46 Scheduled Monuments. There are also several buildings which, whilst not listed on the national heritage list, are considered important buildings of townscape merit.

Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the area?

North Lincolnshire is predominantly rural in character with over 85% of the total land area being in agricultural use. Most of this land is classified as agricultural Grades 2 and 3 (very good and good to moderate quality). However, there are areas of the highest quality Grade 1 (excellent) land, which are found mainly in the valley of the River Trent as well as in parts of the Isle of Axholme and some areas of the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Almost half of the population and most jobs, services and facilities are concentrated in the principal urban area of Scunthorpe and Bottesford. The remainder of North Lincolnshire's population is widely dispersed amongst the area's 85 other settlements - a combination of market towns, villages, rural hamlets, and smaller settlements. These places are diverse in terms of size and service provision and deliver a range of facilities that support the daily needs of residents, with some having a greater range than others.

House prices in the area are generally low compared to the regional and national averages, but there are 'hotspots' in the local housing market with affordability issues, particularly in the rural areas.

North Lincolnshire's population is aging:

21.3% of North Lincolnshire's population is aged 65 and over, this is higher than the national average. By 2039 there is projected to be a substantial growth of 37.2% (13,653 people) in the population over retirement age (65+). By 2039, 28.3% of North Lincolnshire's population is predicted to be aged 65 and over.

The number of people aged 85 and above in North Lincolnshire is predicted to rise at an even faster rate – up by 77.5% between 2019 and 2039. This age group represent some of North Lincolnshire's most frail and vulnerable residents and are the heaviest users of health and social care and will make up 4.5% of the area's total population by 2039.

People in North Lincolnshire are living longer than ever before, with the life expectancy of North Lincolnshire residents improving year on year in line with national trends. However, there are widening inequalities in the area and life expectancy for people living in the most deprived areas (mainly concentrated in the Scunthorpe urban area) is still below those living in the least deprived. Similarly, they are more likely to experience the greater burden of poor health in older age than those living in the least disadvantaged areas.

North Lincolnshire's households are changing:

Trends show that the number of households in North Lincolnshire will increase by approximately 11% from 73,095 to 81,015 in 2038. At the same time the average size of households is expected to decrease from 2.34 people per household to 2.18 in 2041.

North Lincolnshire's student population will grow:

The recent development of the University Campus North Lincolnshire has boosted the higher education offer locally with 1,500 student places, with plans for purpose-built student accommodation to be constructed in Scunthorpe in the future.

Significant levels of international in-migration:

Evidence from the Census 2011 shows that the majority of those moving house into North Lincolnshire 70% have moved from within the North Lincolnshire area, with 30% moving into the area from elsewhere. Of those people moving into North Lincolnshire in 2011, the majority (1,014) were from outside the UK. Most of those North Lincolnshire residents moving away from the area were going to North East Lincolnshire (440) and West Lindsey (351).

Transport Infrastructure

Although North Lincolnshire is a predominantly rural area, its transport network has routes of both international and national importance that also provide links for local people to several regional centres outside North Lincolnshire and key local hubs within.

There are over 800 miles of motorway and highways in North Lincolnshire, managed by the Highways Agency (motorways and trunk roads) and North Lincolnshire Council (all other roads). Visitors can travel straight through (west to east) the Borough via the M180 motorway and A180 dual carriageway.

North Lincolnshire is well served by rail, with the Trans-Pennine line providing direct links to the East Coast Main Line at Doncaster. However, despite these links rail is not viewed as a primary means of travel, particularly for commuting purposes. There are significant rail freight movements through North Lincolnshire with over 20% of all UK rail freight passing through the area. According to Network Rail, two of the region's largest freight traffic generators are in North Lincolnshire.

Most North Lincolnshire's bus services are operated from Scunthorpe Bus Station and are provided by two main bus operators. The existing bus network is split into urban services and rural or inter-urban services. The urban bus services operate within the main Scunthorpe area and the rural/inter-urban services operate throughout North Lincolnshire, linking the more rural settlements in the area, as well as places outside the authority with urban locations. Most urban services operate as a circular route to and from Scunthorpe Bus Station, which provides easy and direct access to the main retail area. The number of bus passengers in North Lincolnshire has increased significantly from 2.8 million in 2003/04 to 3.9 million in 2012/13, with a peak of 4 million.

The existing cycle network in North Lincolnshire includes several signed routes on roads and footpaths. The cycle routes on footpaths are either shared facilities or segregated from pedestrians. The remainder of off-street routes are on specially designated cycle paths.

Humberside International Airport currently has the second largest heliport in the UK as well as flights to holiday destinations. It has flights to Aberdeen with Eastern Airways, and daily flights to and from Schiphol Amsterdam Airport, the fifth largest passenger airport and one of the four most important airport hubs in Europe.