

# News Release

# ONECORNWALL

## A new unified council for Cornwall

*15 August 2008*

### **Disappointment at Boundary Committee delay on council size**

The Boundary Committee for England have confirmed today that they are minded to accept the submission from the One Cornwall Implementation Executive that there should be 123 Councillors for the new unitary authority. This follows a further period of six weeks public consultation on Council size for Cornwall which ended on the 18th July.

Unfortunately, at the same time, the Committee has announced that it will not be able to complete the work necessary to implement the proposed changes by the elections scheduled for May or June 2009. This means that the elections will have to proceed on the basis of 82 Councillors for the new authority with the same electoral divisions as the current County Council.

Head of Legal Services with the County Council and Lead Officer for the Cornwall Electoral Review, Richard Williams, said, "**Whilst it is encouraging that the Boundary Committee have accepted the arguments in favour of there being 123 Councillors for the new authority, which were put forward by the Implementation Executive and supported by five District Councils, it is disappointing that the timescale does not allow the proposals to be implemented in time for next year's elections.**"

He added, "**The Electoral Commission will have to decide when the proposals are brought into effect and that could mean further elections before the end of the normal four year cycle which will not help to establish and embed the structures of the new authority.**" MORE/..

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Members and Officers will now consider carefully the implications of this announcement and, in the meantime, the Boundary Committee will begin a period of twelve weeks consultation on the draft detailed scheme for 123 electoral divisions which was submitted to them by the Implementation Executive.

Fred Greenslade, Vice-Chair of the One Cornwall Implementation Executive, expressed his concern at the Boundary Committee's delay.

**"I cannot understand the reason for this delay and I am very angry about it. Cornwall has a new council starting next year and this prevarication by the Boundary Committee is not at all helpful.**

**"We have worked very hard to design the new council so that it has a strong focus on local communities. Our proposal for 123 councillors is very much aligned with our plans on localism and the community networks. I personally feel that there is a risk that the delay in implementing the new electoral divisions will impede the smooth delivery of the new council."**

**Ends**

**Copy of the Boundary Committee letter to Councillor David Whalley follows**

**More/..**

**15 August 2008**

Dear Councillor Whalley

**ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CORNWALL**

I write to you in your capacity as Chair of the Implementation Executive for Cornwall.

You will be aware that the Boundary Committee met yesterday to consider the responses it had received during the further consultation on council size for the new Cornwall unitary authority.

The Committee concluded that, on the basis of the evidence available to it, it is minded to base its draft recommendations on a council size of 123 members for the new unitary authority. This decision is subject to the Committee's full and detailed consideration of the electoral arrangements proposed for the county, and will only be confirmed when the Committee publishes its draft recommendations. Those draft recommendations will, of course, be subject to full public consultation and, as you are aware, the Committee's recommendations can change between the draft and final stages in the light of representations received.

I was grateful for the opportunity to meet the Implementation Executive in Truro prior to its meeting on 11 July to discuss the Committee's review and the likely timescales for its completion. At that meeting, I said that given the need to carry out further consultation on the issue of council size, there was no possibility of the Boundary Committee being able to complete its review of Cornwall in time for the implementation by the Electoral Commission of any changes to electoral arrangements in local elections in May 2009. However, I indicated that there was just an outside possibility that any changes could be implemented in June 2009, if the Government decided that local elections were to be combined with elections to the European Parliament scheduled for that month. This was on the basis that the Boundary Committee had received by 18 July:

- a fully evidenced proposal for council size that it judged could form the basis of consultation on draft recommendations; and
- a fully worked up and evidenced electoral scheme for new electoral divisions based on that council size.

While the first of those requirements has been met, after initial consideration of the proposed new electoral divisions and supporting data and evidence, it is clear to the Committee that further work needs to be undertaken by the Committee before can be confident that its draft recommendations are the most appropriate for the new council. Boundary Committee staff are already in contact with Council officers seeking clarification of and further information on a number of matters.

As a consequence, I have to advise you that, given the serious delay to which this review of Cornwall has been subject, the view of the Boundary Committee is that there is now no possibility of any new electoral arrangements being implemented in any combined elections in June 2009.

Moving forward, the Committee intends to confirm its current thinking on council size, and publish its draft recommendations report by the first week in November. The Committee will consult on its draft recommendations for 12 weeks, before taking decisions on what to recommend to the Electoral Commission.

I am copying this letter to all those who submitted representations to the Committee during the recent further consultation period and to the chief executives of all local authorities in Cornwall. A copy will also be placed on the Electoral Commission's website.

Yours sincerely

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

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