

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Tuesday 7 May 2002
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

13th Meeting 2002, Session 1

CONVENER

*Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

*Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD)

*Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab)

*Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)

Colin Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP)

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con)

Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)

Peter Peacock (Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services)

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP)

John Young (West of Scotland) (Con)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Eugene Windsor

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Irene Fleming

ASSISTANT CLERK

Neil Stewart

LOCATION

The Chamber

Scottish Parliament

Local Government Committee

Tuesday 7 May 2002

(Afternoon)

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 15:03*]

Items in Private

The Convener (Trish Godman): Colleagues, let us start. I ask members to agree that we take in private item 4, under which we will consider a draft report, and item 5, under which the committee will consider draft terms of reference for an adviser. Is that agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Subordinate Legislation

Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002 (SSI 2002/156)

The Convener: As we move on to the second item of business, I welcome the extra MSPs who are attending today's meeting. I guess that we will be in the Guinness book of records, as I am quite sure that the Local Government Committee—or, indeed, any committee of the Parliament—has never had quite so many visitors.

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I seek a point of clarification, convener. During the debate on the Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002, do you intend to vacate the chair and hand over to the deputy convener? If we go to a vote and you are still in the chair, do you intend to use your casting vote?

The Convener: I hope that I will not need to use my casting vote, but if I need to use it, I certainly will. I have no intention of vacating the chair and there is absolutely no need for me to do so. I have checked that out in both the code of practice and in standing orders.

For our consideration of the Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002, which is a negative instrument, we are joined by Peter Peacock, who is the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services; Leslie Evans, who is the head of the Scottish Executive local government, constitution and governance division; and Gillian Russell, who is from the solicitors division of the Scottish Executive's finance and central services department. We are also joined by Ann Callaghan, Alex Gibson and Nikki Brown, all of whom are from the deputy minister's department. I also welcome Gordon Jackson, who will move the motion, and all the other members who are attending today.

Let me respond again to the point that Sandra White made. I have sought advice and it has been confirmed to me that, under the "Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament" and the Scotland Act 1998 (Transitory and Transitional Provisions) (Members' Interests) Order, I am obliged to declare only registrable interests when participating in relevant parliamentary proceedings. The fact that my constituency covers part of the Renfrewshire Council area is not a registrable interest. I have no obligation to declare that.

However, the general principles of the code of conduct place a duty on members to be as open and as transparent as possible in all their

decisions and actions. The code states:

“Members have a duty to take decisions solely in terms of the public interest.”

As transparency is important, I declare that my constituency covers part of the Renfrewshire Council area. However, the code prevents me neither from participating in the debate nor from convening the meeting. The part of my constituency that is in the Renfrewshire Council area does not touch on Braehead.

We will now move to the formal consideration of the order. The Subordinate Legislation Committee's report has been included in members' papers for today's meeting. That committee did not consider that the Parliament's attention needed to be drawn to the order.

Gordon Jackson has lodged a motion to annul the order. I propose to handle the debate as follows. I shall ask Gordon to speak to and move the motion—I will give him 15 minutes. I shall then ask the deputy minister to respond. If he needs it, the deputy minister can have the same amount of time. I will then invite committee members to speak and then open up the debate to other members at my discretion.

As about nine or 10 members have said that they would like to contribute to the debate, I point out that standing orders say that we have 90 minutes to complete our consideration of the order. If I give 15 minutes to Gordon Jackson and 15 minutes to the deputy minister, that is half an hour away already. I will also give Gordon Jackson and the deputy minister five minutes to sum up at the end. I therefore suggest to members who want to speak to try not to be repetitive. If I am to give all members a fair chance, I suggest that members should aim to make their speeches no longer than about three minutes.

The deputy minister will then be invited to respond. Finally, I shall ask Gordon Jackson to close the debate. I cannot go over the 90 minutes, but how I manage that 90 minutes is up to me and I have given everyone an idea of how I will do that. I also remind members that they can speak only for or against the motion. Members cannot ask the deputy minister questions, because this will be a debate, not a ministerial statement.

If members are clear about that, I ask Gordon Jackson to speak to and move the motion.

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab): The motion asks the committee to recommend that no further action be taken on the Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002.

I am sure that the background and the subject are fairly familiar. At the boundary between Glasgow and Renfrewshire lies an area of

substantial development, which includes the Braehead shopping centre. At the moment, almost the whole development is within the Glasgow boundary, although I appreciate that that might change over the years. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland has recommended that the boundary should be moved, so that the whole development lies within Renfrewshire. The order that we are debating implements that recommendation. I object to the proposed change at this time.

I mention in passing that the form of the order appears to be defective. Although that is a legal argument, which should be considered elsewhere, it is appropriate to point out that the narrative of the change is inaccurate, because it refers to at least one location that is factually outwith the area that we are dealing with. Although that might be more a matter of incompetence than of bad policy, it suggests that the whole issue might not have been dealt with as carefully and as thoroughly as might have been thought appropriate. At this stage, however, I am more concerned with the principle.

I will set out my thinking and my involvement in the matter. I am not a Glaswegian by birth, but my roots are in the west of Scotland, where I have worked for most of my life. Like most people, I have an ambivalent attitude towards the city and I have not always seen eye to eye with Glasgow City Council. As time has gone by, certain things have become clear to me. Glasgow has real problems. Although it was and remains the commercial focus of Scotland, changes that have taken place over a long time have meant that turning it into a modern, thriving city has not been the easiest of tasks. Much has been achieved and the Braehead area is an important part of that.

The regeneration of the Clyde is of vital importance. The development is long overdue, but it is beginning. On the north bank of the river is the Glasgow harbour development. On my side of the river, the science centre and the new BBC headquarters are examples of real progress. One cannot divorce the Braehead area from that picture—it is part of the united strategy. The proposed change would mean, for example, that a major development on one side of the river would be controlled by a different authority from that which controlled a development that was straight across on the opposite bank. We talk about joined-up government, but this would give us a disjointed community. The strategy is disjointed and makes no sense.

Many people regard Glasgow as one of the finest shopping and leisure centres outside London. Such acknowledgement is not of interest just to Glasgow—it is of wider importance. Glasgow's success in attracting that reputation is

important to the wider area and Braehead is just a part of that picture.

The whole development has strong links, not only to Glasgow, but to the Govan community. The local enterprise company, the Govan Initiative, has been closely involved with all the training and employment opportunities that the development has brought, which in turn has resulted in links between developers and the Govan community. The developers have given support to all kinds of much-needed community facilities in the area. The proposed change would damage that.

It sounds as if the issue is parochial. People are sitting thinking, "There he goes again, it is all about Glasgow this and Glasgow that," but to remove the Braehead development from Glasgow is blatantly to undermine what has been happening. I remind the committee that it is misleading to talk about the Braehead area as if it were the Braehead shopping development. I totally understand the argument against a boundary that runs through checkout 20 in Sainsbury's. However, even if I accept that a change is necessary, the order does much more than is needed to correct the situation. That should be remembered.

The order would take out of Glasgow not only almost the whole shopping mall. It would take out Ikea, which had real links to Glasgow in planning to come to the west of Scotland, and the bottling plant of United Distillers and Vintners, which has been in Glasgow for many years and is one of the biggest spirit bottling plants, if not the biggest such plant, in the world. The change is not about just some administrative problem—there is more to it than that. It will undermine everything that Glasgow is trying to achieve. The problem that it poses is real and will be very damaging to the city. It is not about just the detail of what is good for Glasgow; it is about seeing and understanding the big picture.

15:15

The council and the city are making progress. We need to take a hard look at the structure of all our cities—and that of Glasgow in particular—to ensure that their financial base is solid and sustainable. We need to make changes to our cities and it may well be that Glasgow's boundaries will need to be extended if it is to avoid being continually bled by its own suburbs. I know that that statement is controversial, but it is something that we need to think about. There may need to be other changes of an equally controversial nature, with which I am sure that colleagues in the Parliament or in Glasgow City Council might not agree. All such changes need to be discussed and decided.

That is why I welcome, as I am sure the deputy minister does, the continuing cities review. Let me remind members of the words of Henry McLeish when he was the First Minister—there have been changes since, but I do not think that his words have been departed from. He said:

"The review will be looking at our cities in the round. No issues will be ruled out. I would of course expect issues of tax and local grants to feature as part of the review, but the review is also about enterprise, unemployment, deprivation, finance and transport, which all deserve focused work."

In other words, it is a broad-based, big scale review of the way in which our cities are funded, governed and dealt with. Perhaps I am being simple, but it makes no sense to make a boundary change while that review is taking place. To move Glasgow's boundary inward and to take out of the city almost all the Braehead development and other places that have been part of the city for a long time will send out the wrong signal.

We may have to consider whether the system of business rates needs to be changed. It should be remembered that the business rate for that area is about £28 million. Are we going to consider that in the cities review at the same time as moving the whole development area out of the city? That is fundamentally daft.

Put simply, now is a time to be discussing, planning and reviewing. It is not the time to make isolated decisions that could have serious consequences for the whole process. Unfortunately, none of that detail or strategic thinking plays any part in the boundary commission's deliberations or recommendation. Its only reasoning seems to be historical—"It has been part of Renfrew since Noah was a boy," or words to that effect—or what is described as an

"Examination of the geography and topography of the area".

What does that mean? It means that the boundary commission made its recommendation on the basis of a neat boundary on the map, with no regard to the wider economic and strategic implications of that decision.

We are here to think about such things. Those issues should be important to us all and should make us pause before accepting the recommendation. That is all that I am asking the Local Government Committee to do. I am not asking the committee to reverse the decision in the sense of taking what is part of Renfrewshire into Glasgow's boundaries. That would be equally inappropriate. I am asking the committee that we do not do something with permanent, serious consequences at the wrong time, while we are working out the best way forward.

I will go even further and make it clear that today the committee is being asked only to take a

decision that will allow the whole Parliament to make a decision on the matter. That is the effect of upholding the motion. Bearing in mind the importance of the issue, not only in a parochial sense for Glasgow, but in terms of how we progress our cities generally, it is not unreasonable to ask the committee that, at the very least, the whole Parliament should be given the opportunity to decide on the matter. That is all that I ask.

This is about the best way forward for Glasgow and for our cities. It is not a party-political issue. I read that someone, no doubt from Renfrewshire, has said that I am politicising the issue. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nicola Sturgeon and I are sitting here in the same bank of seats. I am seeking to annul an Executive order, but no one has suggested to me that that is an act of defiance. I hope that committee members from all parties will deal with the matter on that basis. I know that certain members have a constituency interest. I see that on both sides of the argument. However, other members do not have a constituency interest. All that I ask is that they come to the discussion with an open mind. Listen to the rest of the debate and listen to the arguments. Look at the boundary commission's decision, which is based on the fact that it makes a nice wee map, and give me an honest decision. Is this an appropriate time to be making such a change to a major city? Is it reasonable that, next week or the week after, the whole Parliament should be allowed to make a decision? That is the question that I am asking. On that basis, I hope that the committee will agree to the motion.

I move,

That the Local Government Committee recommends that nothing further be done under the Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002 (SS12002/156).

The Convener: Thank you very much. You saved three minutes. I ask the deputy minister to respond.

The Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services (Peter Peacock): I thought that it would be helpful if I set out for the committee the background to the case in somewhat more detail than Gordon Jackson has done, rehearse the logic of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland in coming to its conclusion and say what consideration ministers then gave to the various issues involved. I will pick up on some of the key points that Gordon Jackson made.

First, I will say a few words about the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, as ministers acted on its recommendation. Members will be aware that the boundary commission is separate from the Government. Its powers and duties are set out in the Local

Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Essentially, its purpose is periodically to review local authority boundaries and electoral wards, so as to ensure effective and convenient local government. Its members are experienced and expert in that role. Its statutory role ensures that it is free from any party political influence in going about its business and that it is free from the local pressures that almost inevitably surround boundary questions. All five commissioners are professional people in their own right, who bring a range of experience and expertise to the conduct of their job. The commissioners include a former local authority chief executive, who is therefore experienced in local authority management, including planning and economic development. The commissioners also include people with experience in land use, town planning, economics and geography. All those skills are brought to bear on the work of the commission in arriving at its judgments. I do not think that the commissioners' professionalism and expertise is in doubt on this or any other matter.

The issue of the Braehead boundary was first raised between 1985 and 1990. Action on the matter was delayed because there were continuing issues in other electoral reviews. Then the major local government reorganisation of the mid-1990s took up a lot of time. The review was triggered again in August 1999 by a letter from the boundary commission to the councils involved to see whether the review was still considered necessary. Glasgow City Council felt that it was necessary and that there was an anomaly at Braehead that required to be rectified. The boundary commission also concluded that a review was necessary to correct the anomaly of a boundary, which—as Gordon Jackson indicated—currently runs through a supermarket.

The boundary commission published its provisional proposals in March 2000. In effect, it consulted on three alternative boundary lines. One line put the Braehead development into Glasgow; another put Braehead shopping centre and some adjacent land into Glasgow and the remainder into Renfrewshire; and a further alternative placed the whole development in the Renfrewshire Council area. Maps that detailed the three alternative proposals were widely distributed and advertised. Both councils were asked to make the proposals available for public inspection. The proposals were, by any standards, well advertised and interested parties were given six weeks to respond with their comments.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland made it clear in its report that 41 representations were received. Glasgow City Council made representations, but no representations of any kind were made by any MSP, organisation or person in the Glasgow City Council area. The boundary commission published

its final report in January 2001. In making its recommendation in favour of Renfrewshire Council, it pointed out that an anomaly needed to be rectified and that, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, the entire area should be in one council area. It also pointed out that neither council had made a convincing case that it offered significantly more effective and convenient government of the area than the other. Consequently, the boundary commission believed that examination of the geography and topography of the area provided the best basis for the determination of the boundary. I stress those points in response to the point that Gordon Jackson raised earlier. I have no doubt that in following that route, the boundary commission had regard to many of the elements that Gordon Jackson mentioned, which were about the effectiveness and convenience of local governance.

The boundary commission decided that the King George V dock, the M8 motorway and the river were the most defining physical characteristics for the completion of the boundary. It concluded that drawing the boundary so that the Braehead development would be in Renfrewshire Council's area would produce a better-defined boundary.

Following the publication of the boundary commission's final report, 25 representations were made to ministers. A majority of those—15—supported the boundary commission's decision while 10 were opposed. As you might expect, Renfrewshire Council restated its support for the proposed change. Glasgow City Council made representations as to why it thought that the boundary should be drawn in its favour. In support of its position, it cited the position of Capital Shopping Centres, the main developers of the area and the owner of the key development land. Capital Shopping Centres had originally suggested a slightly modified line to the three published proposals but, after the publication of the report, made a case to ministers in support of the boundary commission's recommendations. Among its reasons were its views that Braehead would benefit from having only one planning authority and that the clear physical boundary that was recommended by the boundary commission would enable its proposals for Braehead to be implemented.

Ministers' powers in relation to matters such as these are clearly set out in statute. In such circumstances ministers can do nothing, can give effect to the recommendation with or without modifications or can direct the boundary commission to undertake a further review.

The do-nothing approach did not commend itself, given the view of the boundary commission and the councils that there was an anomaly that

needed to be rectified. During the review, both councils made it clear to the boundary commission that more effective and convenient local government would ensue if the whole area were in one council area. The boundary commission agreed with that view. Each council argued for its area to be the chosen area.

In considering the merits of the recommendation, ministers were conscious of the fact that the boundary commission had concluded that there was no clear case for Braehead to be located in either local authority area. As I have indicated, the boundary commission therefore tried to discern what was the most appropriate boundary in the circumstances. It concluded that the motorway, the river and the dock provided the clearest physical lines that would constitute a good boundary. Ministers believe that the boundary commission made a clear, logical and soundly reasoned argument in favour of transfer to Renfrewshire Council. That notwithstanding, ministers were clearly aware of representations made subsequent to the boundary commission's recommendation and were clear that they had to give proper consideration to such representations in the event that they raised new, relevant issues. Ministers did not take that task lightly. We considered matters in detail over a lengthy period. Glasgow City Council's concerns included the effect of the loss of a major site from its portfolio of sites for business or industrial use and the financial loss to Glasgow City Council resulting from the transfer. The council maintained that, through the city plan and the Govan Initiative, which Gordon Jackson mentioned, it was best placed to promote Braehead as a commercial centre.

Recent answers that we have given to parliamentary questions have made it clear that the Govan Initiative is unaffected by the boundary commission's recommendation and by ministers' decisions. The report by Glasgow City Council officials makes it clear that under current grant arrangements there are no financial implications for the council. I said earlier that Glasgow City Council cited Capital Shopping Centres' arguments in support of its position. I also said that Capital Shopping Centres made clear in its representations to ministers that it fully supported the boundary commission's recommendations and it set out the reasons for that.

15:30

I hope that I have made it clear that ministers regard the boundary commission as best placed to make such recommendations to them, because it is experienced and expert. I have set out clearly the fact that ministers gave full and detailed consideration to the boundary commission's report

and to subsequent representations. On balance, ministers concluded that the boundary commission's recommendation should be followed. We believe that it will provide a strong and clearly defined boundary.

I want to address some of the points that Gordon Jackson raised in his contribution. If I miss some of them out, or if members want to make comments in support of them, I will try to pick them up when I sum up. Gordon Jackson pointed to an inaccuracy in the documentation, which I agree is most unfortunate. However, he said that he was aware that the inaccuracy does not affect the vires of the order. Although he made a clever debating point, I am sure that he knows that it is not material in our consideration today.

Gordon Jackson made a number of points about the regeneration of the Clyde and its significance to Glasgow and the surrounding areas. As members will know, for strategic land-use planning issues, the Clyde is part of a single structure plan area, to which Renfrewshire Council and Glasgow City Council belong. Both councils are intricately caught up in the long-term use of the area. There is also a need to regenerate communities in Renfrewshire and they regard Braehead as central to plans for regeneration. It is not insignificant that Capital Shopping Centres turned to support the boundary commission's recommendations; it believes that the recommendations would best help it to develop the area in the way in which it wants. Capital Shopping Centres is a principal actor on that stage.

Gordon Jackson made points about links between the community and the developer and the movement of people around the community. I contend that that is not affected by the boundary commission's recommendation or by our decision, because in any urban circumstance, people are still free to make the relationships that are necessary across boundaries.

Gordon Jackson made a case about the cities review. I will be absolutely clear about our position on that, so that the committee is in no doubt. As Gordon Jackson said, the cities review is not examining boundaries per se; it is examining the economic, social and environmental future of our cities and considering how we continue to have thriving urban centres that contribute to the lives of people in Scotland. Nothing has been ruled out of the review and people are free to raise matters, including the question of boundaries, with us.

Glasgow City Council has argued, not just in the cities review, but more widely over a prolonged period of time, that it feels that Glasgow is underbounded. Notwithstanding the fact that the cities review is under way, the Executive announced at the end of March, as part of the white paper on renewing local democracy, that it

does not intend to review local authority boundaries. The Executive made that policy clear in full knowledge of the case that Glasgow City Council was making about its perceived underbounded nature.

Given that Glasgow City Council shares boundaries with six other councils, any wholesale review of its boundaries would constitute a major review of Scottish local government by anyone's standards. Almost 25 per cent of councils, including Glasgow City Council, would be caught up in such a review. The views that the councils around Glasgow City Council have about the nature of boundaries are perhaps very different from the view that Glasgow City Council holds. Any wholesale review of Glasgow City Council's boundaries would run against the Executive's policy. A major review of boundaries simply does not arise in the cities review and it will not feature in the cities review discussions.

In any event, if ministers were asked questions about boundaries, they would invariably ask the boundary commission to review the boundaries. That is where we are today in respect of Braehead. When the boundary commission asked Glasgow City Council that question, the council supported a review of the Braehead boundary. The cities review will add nothing further in respect of the Braehead question. That means that there is no point in delaying that decision. I will close with those remarks.

The Convener: Thank you. I invite members of the committee to catch my eye if they want to speak for or against the motion.

Ms White: I want to support Gordon Jackson's motion S1M-2957. In the interests of fairness, I will limit my comments to the main claims of the two councils. I declare an interest, in that I am a Glaswegian and a Glasgow MSP.

Glasgow City Council believes that Braehead should be within the Glasgow boundary. The council's main claims are that the city assessor is responsible for all on-site surveys and valuations; the council is responsible for all building control matters; more than half of the shoppers who use Braehead come from the Glasgow area; and more than one third of the Braehead work force comes from Glasgow.

Gordon Jackson and the minister referred to training schemes. I have lodged questions about the Govan Initiative. The Braehead centre, in partnership with the Govan Initiative and other training centres, has helped areas of social deprivation. It has done that well and I am concerned about the continuation of that work.

The Glasgow City Council submission touched on regeneration. Gordon Jackson and the minister also referred to that. Regeneration is a key factor

in the area of Glasgow from the Broomielaw to Pacific Quay, and it is important that Glasgow maintains control of regeneration in that area. I find it disturbing that, if the order went ahead, the River Clyde would have two councils looking after it. Regeneration in Glasgow would be affected by the order.

The minister mentioned boundary changes, which is an important point. At the moment, Glasgow has a shrinking boundary and a shrinking population. That would be made worse by the order.

Renfrewshire Council's main claim is based on 17th century plans of Renfrewshire. That fact has been recognised by the boundary commission. However, if 17th century or earlier geographical boundaries were to be followed, Scotland could reclaim York and other areas. It is ridiculous that Renfrewshire Council's claim should win over Glasgow City Council's claims.

Page 8 of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's report mentions that both local authorities have a general agreement that:

"in terms of effective and convenient local government the Braehead Centre and approach roads should be under the jurisdiction of a single local authority."

Paragraph 21 of the report states:

"We concluded, therefore, that, in terms of effective and convenient local government, proposals A and C would be equally effective."

That is why I support Gordon Jackson's motion, so that the order can be debated in the Parliament.

Page 4 of the boundary commission's report mentions that Glasgow City Council wrote in support of proposal A, subject to further consultation. That is what Gordon Jackson is asking for when he asks for the order to be debated in the chamber.

Page 5 of the report mentions that Renfrewshire Council was initially opposed to proposal A, but that it now considers that proposal to be more acceptable than proposal B. Renfrewshire Council advised

"that should the Commission decide that proposal A should be pursued, the proposed realignment of the administrative boundary should be amended."

I mentioned the boundary commission's statement on page 8 of its report. If members consider that statement along with the representations of Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council, it is clear that common ground exists and that plan A, even with certain boundary changes, could be acceptable to both councils. That is why, in fairness to both councils, I support Gordon Jackson's recommendation that

the order be debated, not just by Gordon Jackson and the minister, but by the full Parliament. I uphold Gordon Jackson's recommendation and ask the committee to vote to allow the order to be debated in the chamber.

The Convener: As no other member of the committee wishes to speak, I will open up the meeting to members of the Scottish Parliament who are not members of the Local Government Committee. If we stick to speeches of about three minutes, everyone who has indicated that they wish to speak will probably get in. I call Pauline McNeill, to be followed by Johann Lamont, because they caught my eye first.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Thank you, convener, for your efficiency and for your understanding of the reasons why so many members have decided to join today's meeting of the Local Government Committee. As you can see, this issue is important for MSPs who represent the city of Glasgow.

I start by expressing my disappointment with the minister's justification for supporting the boundary commission's decision. I waited for a reason that might strike a chord with people, such as an explanation of why the boundary commission came down on the side that it did, but I have heard no such reason.

We must be clear about the consultation process. I can vouch for the fact that neither the boundary commission nor the Scottish Executive formally consulted me as a Glasgow MSP. To my knowledge, apart from the MSP who represents the area covered by the boundary change, no Glasgow MSP was asked for their views. I am greatly concerned about that and I suggest that the boundary commission's decision was not democratic.

Glasgow will feel a sense of gross unfairness unless the decision is reconsidered or—at least—the Scottish Parliament has a full debate about the decision's impact on Glasgow. It is no secret that Glasgow has been sensitive to boundary issues over the years. An independent report supports Glasgow City Council's view that the city lost out considerably after the boundaries were reorganised, and the proposal that Glasgow should lose out on another boundary issue is a further blow to the city. This issue is not simply about where the boundary is drawn—it is about who benefits from Braehead shopping centre, which Glasgow City Council had the foresight to know would be good for Scotland. Glasgow is the retail capital of the north of Britain, and, as I represent the city centre, I am concerned about the different feel to retail that will come about if Braehead is managed by a different authority, because there will be a competitive side to Glasgow shopping that did not exist previously.

The city of Glasgow has half of Scotland's poverty, and the issues for Glasgow go beyond those that we will discuss today. The balance needs to be redressed so that Glasgow can deal with the problems that it faces. I repeat that the boundary commission's decision is a further blow to Glasgow, given the future benefits of the Braehead shopping centre, and should be reconsidered.

I support the proposal for a full debate in Parliament during which members would hear the strength of feeling about the boundary commission's decision. I have yet to understand the logic of putting Braehead in Renfrewshire, apart from that offered by a 17th century map, and nothing that I have heard today has changed my mind. I hope that the committee will consider carefully what members have said. I support Gordon Jackson fully. Another solution must be found, because the boundary commission's decision is the worst possible solution, both for Glasgow and for Renfrewshire.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I hope that my return to the happy hunting ground of the Local Government Committee will result in a useful decision at the end of the debate.

I represent Glasgow Pollok and I am here because my constituents have strong views, both on the boundary commission's decision and, more broadly, on the way in which Glasgow has been treated and the difficulties that the city faces. Many residents of Pollok live on a boundary and are aware of the rationale that says that it is logical to live outside the city. Although the city may not lose any of its population as a direct result of the boundary commission's decision, I have no doubt that that decision reinforces the argument about the problems that are faced by economically active people who make a rational decision to live inside the boundaries of a city that has difficulties.

The decision to move Braehead outside Glasgow's boundaries seems perverse and unjust, particularly given Glasgow City Council's view of the cities review. The council decided that the key debate was not about boundaries but about how to sustain Glasgow's economic power to benefit both the city and the surrounding areas. Glasgow City Council understood that it was not in competition with other local authorities but had to work with them. It is most unfortunate that the reason for the decision has been characterised as competition. Glasgow City Council has understood the need to work with those outside its boundaries, but the decision flies in the face of that. Although Glasgow City Council had reservations about the Braehead centre's impact on the city's shopping and about out-of-town developments, it facilitated the development of the Braehead centre by providing infrastructure. For Glasgow now not to benefit from that seems perverse.

15:45

Glasgow City Council has been in the driving seat of the argument on changing the way in which business rates are distributed. I understand that the committee has taken a view on that. Some people picture Glasgow as a black hole into which lots of money is thrown. Glasgow politicians resent that characterisation of the city. The reality is that Glasgow is an economic dynamo that generates wealth for all the surrounding areas. We have poverty in Glasgow, but it is poverty among plenty. All the signals seem to be that the Scottish Executive will change its position on business rates and perhaps leave more of them in the city. Given that, it is deeply ironic that the Executive will pluck out of the city one of those places that generates a business rate from which Glasgow City Council might get some dividend for the support that it has given the area in the past. That is most unfortunate.

We see reflected in the decision a debate between Glasgow and Renfrewshire. The committee should provide a Scotland-wide perspective, and the Parliament should take a view on the matter so that it is lifted out of being a simple debate between Glasgow and Renfrewshire. It is important that the committee gives the cities review the opportunity to do its job and to consider the realities of depopulation and economic regeneration in a city that is slighted and damaged by the decision. We ask the committee to give us an opportunity to reflect on that beyond our individual constituency interests and to allow the Parliament to take a view so that Glasgow can be sustained as it should be.

Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): I support Gordon Jackson's motion. The cross-party support for his motion should not be lost on us. Not many issues in the past three years have united all of Glasgow's elected representatives, but the order is one of them. That speaks volumes for the strength of our case.

Our support is not a knee-jerk reaction in favour of Glasgow against Renfrewshire. There are very strong reasons why Braehead should be within Glasgow's boundaries. Gordon Jackson has rehearsed many of those reasons. Half of those who shop at Braehead and a third of those who work in Braehead live within the city's boundaries. That was a factor in the initial view of Capital Shopping Centres that Braehead should be in Glasgow.

Another reason is the fact that, increasingly, retail tourism is extremely important to Glasgow. Others have said—and it is true—that Glasgow is the second biggest shopping centre in the United Kingdom. Braehead shopping centre is seen as the jewel in that shopping crown and its loss to Glasgow would affect the city's ability to market

itself to those who are attracted to a city because of its shopping attractions.

The importance to Braehead of using Glasgow's brand as a means of marketing the shopping centre is not lost on Capital Shopping Centres. With respect to the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, he has slightly overplayed the company's view that the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland should be supported, which arises more from a desire for the matter to be settled than from any view that the commission's decision was right. Capital Shopping Centres—I do not speak for the company—initially took the view that the Braehead centre should be in Glasgow. That says a lot.

Gordon Jackson made some important points about Braehead's place in the plans for the regeneration of the Clyde. In the light of those plans, he is right to say that removing Braehead from Glasgow would be nonsense. To take that decision now would pre-empt the cities review, which would be a mistake.

The minister said that the decision had no financial implications for Glasgow. As matters stand, that may be the case. However, it is possible that the rules that govern the distribution of business rates will change in the foreseeable future. If that were to happen and Glasgow was allowed to retain more of the money from the business rates that are levied within its boundaries, the loss of Braehead would become an extremely expensive loss to Glasgow. Such circumstances would make that loss unjust in the extreme.

My final point is about the message that the decision on the motion will send. Not agreeing to Gordon Jackson's motion and not allowing the issue to be debated in the chamber would send entirely the wrong message to a city that is struggling hard, with a great deal of success, to pull itself out of the doldrums. At the very least, and in the interests of Glasgow, the matter should be debated fully in the chamber.

Colin Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP): My constituency covers all of the Renfrewshire Council area and I am a former member of that council. I was born in Ralston, which is immediately adjacent to the part of Glasgow that is under dispute. I am an interesting combination of a buddie and a weegie. The existence of Braehead is damaging to central Paisley. Before Braehead was built, it was predicted that 35 per cent of the white goods trade would disappear from Paisley. Paisley has had to reinvent itself as a result of Braehead.

I am not suggesting for a minute that the change has anything to do with compensation or ancient history, which are irrelevant to the debate. Gordon

Jackson argued cogently and potently for Braehead's association with Govan. Equally, on historic grounds, one could argue that Braehead is associated with Renfrew burgh, which is part of Renfrewshire Council's area. Gordon Jackson also argued potently for the strategic benefit of keeping Braehead in Glasgow, but as Peter Peacock pointed out, there is a structure plan that combines all councils of good will in trying to get the best possible outcome for the whole of the Clyde valley. The parties in power and the oppositions in those councils are all much the same and they have the good of the entire area at heart.

I am the last person in the world to be a torchbearer for boundary commissions, which made mincemeat out of the perfectly logical wards that were associated with villages and communities and which messed up broad electoral constituencies to get the numbers game right. When that type of thing happens, politicians get the boot in and talk about gerrymandering. However, I regard the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland as an objective organisation that must stand back from the passions of such matters and make an adult, objective decision.

I oppose Gordon Jackson's motion because we rely on organisations such as the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland to give a clear and objective overview. If we support his motion, we would create an unfortunate precedent. If the matter were to go to debate in the Parliament, the big message that we would give to the public would be that we were questioning the integrity of an organisation of unquestioned integrity. That is not a message that we should give.

Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP): The debate seems to be polarising into a David and Goliath situation. I want to bring it back to asking committee members, when they consider how to vote, to remember that the changes are a clear recommendation—accepted by the Scottish Executive—of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland. The changes have been through a consultation process and have taken more than two years to be produced. All the arguments were rehearsed and the recommendation was clear.

The argument is also about regeneration and the future, rather than the historic past. Renfrewshire Council and Braehead's owners have worked for five years on the plan for the area development framework, which includes Braehead. In August 2000, Renfrewshire Council's planning committee approved the area development framework and it was included in the new draft local plan. That was done in conjunction with Capital Shopping Centres. Another important

aspect is that Renfrewshire Council has made provision in its capital plan to contribute to the renewal proposals for Braehead.

I urge members to look at the arguments that have been put before them and at the conclusions that were reached after consultation. I make a wee plea related to the cities review. Paisley has tried and failed twice to become a city. In losing Braehead completely to Glasgow, Paisley's future would be blighted.

Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):

Like Pauline McNeill, I am here today to say that I have not heard anything that persuades me that the case has been made for the boundaries to be changed in favour of Renfrewshire. None of my colleagues who represent areas in Renfrewshire has said anything to persuade me either.

No one is saying that the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland lacks expertise on such matters. We are not questioning the commission's integrity. The minister said that the commission used the geography and topography of the area in reaching a decision and that the decision was logical. However, some of us who represent constituencies in the Glasgow area, the boundaries of which were decided by the commission some time ago, could see no logic in the commission's decisions. We cannot agree that the commission used logic to reach the Glasgow-Renfrewshire decision either.

We have heard no good reasons to support the proposed changes, which represent a further blow to Glasgow and its endeavours to address poverty and ill health, using money generated from the business rate. That should be taken into account. The cities review set out to address issues such as the economics of city boundaries and how to deal with related problems; that is the context in which to consider the issue. However, given that that has not happened, we should allow the Parliament to have a say in the matter. The issue is much wider than Glasgow or Renfrewshire. We need to consider the whole situation in terms of economic development and other issues. I ask the committee to agree to Gordon Jackson's motion to annul and to allow the Parliament to debate the matter in due course.

Mr Kenneth Gibson (Glasgow) (SNP): As Colin Campbell has admitted, Renfrewshire Council was less than enthusiastic about Braehead, which was nurtured and developed by Glasgow. Indeed, Renfrewshire Council was against Braehead's construction, objected to Ikea and opposed the extension of Marks and Spencer. As Colin Campbell suggested, the council obviously saw the development as a threat to the centre of Paisley. Surely the centre of Paisley should be allowed to evolve and adapt, which is what the stimulus of Braehead has enabled it to do.

Colin Campbell suggested that we are questioning the integrity of the boundary commission. I have never questioned its integrity, but when I was a local councillor I challenged several boundaries that were set by the commission—some of the proposals were outlandish—and was successful every time. I hope that we will be successful today.

Fiona McLeod talked about this being a David and Goliath contest. If that is true, it is because those who are opposed to Gordon Jackson's motion have not turned up. Today's debate reflects the passion of members across the political divide for the city of Glasgow. Those members are here in numbers because we feel strongly about the development.

When Braehead was set up, it was marketed as part of the Glasgow brand. As has been mentioned on a couple of occasions, Glasgow is the UK's second largest centre for retail tourism. That point has been echoed by Patrick Browne, the director of the Scottish Retail Consortium, who said that the decision to move Braehead into Renfrewshire would have

"a huge psychological impact on Glasgow. The city will not be able to market Braehead with its other shopping centres. It will also damage Braehead itself, which had hoped to market itself as a tourist and shopping destination. That will be much harder to do if it is in Renfrewshire, which is not that well known outside the area."

If Mr Browne is right—and there is no reason to believe that he is not—the boundary change will have an adverse impact on the wider Scottish economy. No doubt that is why Braehead's owners, Capital Shopping Centres, originally wanted to remain within Glasgow City Council's boundaries. As Nicola Sturgeon pointed out, Capital Shopping Centres has probably made a different proposal because it wants a decision to be taken and is fed up being browbeaten by Renfrewshire Council and others over the issue.

Of the 100 shops, all except one are currently in Glasgow. The minister said that the uniform business rate will not be abolished, but if it were to be abolished in the future, Glasgow would lose £13 million. We have already heard that Glasgow suffers from endemic poverty. That is a loss that Glasgow could not sustain.

We do not believe that a decision should be taken today, because the matter is not urgent. It is more important that we take the right decision for the city of Glasgow.

Mr Peacock is on record as saying that there is "a broad ranging review examining the economic, environmental and social prospects for Scotland's cities."

That is the cities review. Braehead is not being considered under the cities review, which is illogical and flies in the face of what Glasgow was promised.

How can Braehead not be relevant when it is a power of Glasgow's retail economy? Eighty-nine hectares would be lost at a time when Glasgow is already constrained.

Concerns have been expressed in the Glasgow media about the pledge made by the former First Minister, Henry McLeish, that he would await the cities review. Charles Gordon, the leader of Glasgow City Council, said:

"This decision on Braehead is just not consistent with Scottish Executive policy."

He added that

"the Scottish Executive had 'failed to honour'"

an understanding with Glasgow.

That is not acceptable. If the decision goes against Gordon Jackson, it will be seen as a betrayal of Glasgow by the committee and by the Executive. I hope that we will get a decision that will allow the Parliament to decide on the matter in its widest context. That is the best way to be fair to Glasgow and to Renfrewshire, and to get the best decision for all concerned.

16:00

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Over the years, the convener and I have engaged in many debates about Glasgow's funding. One of the principal aspects that came out in those debates was the question of fairness. Does Glasgow get a fair deal, particularly bearing in mind its metropolitan status? We are talking about fairness today; it will not be fair if Glasgow loses Braehead.

A number of questions have arisen. The simplest must be: why did Capital Shopping Centres and all the tenants of the centre come to Braehead in the first place? They came because of Glasgow, its drawing power and its spending power. The majority of turnover in the shops comes from Glasgow's citizens and residents. That is an important consideration that has to be borne in mind.

I found the minister's justification for the boundary commission's decision to be a little bit disappointing. It is true that it is preferable for the boundaries of any city or any local authority to be clearly defined in topographical and geographical terms. There is therefore an argument in favour of what is being proposed. However, it is up to the boundary commission to define any particular boundary. As has been suggested by two of my colleagues, the boundary commissions have landed us with some eccentric Parliamentary boundaries and some bizarre local government boundaries, but that should not preclude the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland from reversing its decision on Braehead.

The minister also dealt with the cities review,

which is still outstanding. He carefully suggested that there would be no major review of boundaries within that cities review. We will look forward to what will eventually come to pass with some trepidation and perhaps some enthusiasm. However, my argument remains—the decision is unfair for Glasgow.

The debate also takes place against a background of us all having at least half an eye on a possible change in rates retention for Glasgow. Glasgow is a city that has immense poverty and difficulties and that has, over the years, lacked confidence. It has been encouraging that that confidence has grown over the past 20 years or so. If today's decision goes against Glasgow, that confidence will take a painful blow.

It is important to remember what the committee is being asked to do. The committee is not being asked to change the boundary commission's decision. It is merely being asked to put the matter before the Parliament so that it can be debated widely. In the interests of Glasgow, a city that has suffered a great deal over the past 50 years, that is surely not too much to ask.

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): Just by way of a declaration of interest, I have lived in Renfrewshire all my life. I was at secondary school in Greenock, my law practice is in Glasgow and my constituency office is in Paisley. I have a foot in every possible camp. I do not use that description lightly; I made a submission to the boundary commission because I feel strongly about the matter. I was certainly sufficiently interested to make my submission.

I was, however, interested in the minister's comment that there have been no such representations from Glasgow representatives. Although there might be legitimate reasons for that, it indicates that local knowledge and awareness of Braehead are, ironically, to be found not in Glasgow, but in the communities of Renfrew, Paisley and—more interestingly—down the river into Inverclyde and across the river into Dumbarton and Argyll and Bute. I listened with great interest to Gordon Jackson, whose argument seems to be that cohesion is the principle behind Glasgow's retention of Braehead. It is always the test of a good jurist to examine whether one's opponent has an equally strong argument to advance. However, Gordon chose conveniently to disregard the cohesion argument that might well apply to Renfrewshire.

I am not examining the matter from some "little Renfrewshire" viewpoint. I live in the area and am well aware that there is a need for a strategic driver that will enable the communities of Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, and across the river in Dumbarton and Argyll and Bute to develop a strategic plan and a vision for the next 10, 20 or 30

years. Such a plan and vision will allow those communities to maximise their development potential and, in particular, to harness the regeneration of the Clyde. I should also point out that the length of the banks of the Clyde significantly exceeds the boundaries of the Clyde upriver from Braehead.

I also dispute Gordon Jackson's other argument that there are strong physical links. Anyone who looks at the Braehead site will see that Braehead is peripheral, not integral, to Glasgow. It is at best semi-detached, because it is on the far margin of the city boundary.

That leads me to my next question. If there are opportunities for strategic development of the areas west, south and north of the river, why is Glasgow feeling denuded, hard done by or deprived? Glasgow has alternative economic drivers: it has several shopping malls, an enormous tourism driver, a huge leisure industry and several universities. In other words, it has many driving attributes that any one of the surrounding communities would give its eye teeth to possess.

In short, as far as I can understand the Glasgow presentation, Glasgow should have Braehead because Glasgow is bigger. My response to that is: if that is all that Glasgow can come up with, its acquisitive mitts should not be allowed anywhere near Braehead.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Five former Glasgow city councillors are present today: the convener, Kenny Gibson, Bill Aitken, John Young and me. They will recall the strategic development work that was carried out to ensure that businesses were located in the Braehead shopping centre in the first place. Indeed, that work continues. If proposal C in the boundary commission's report were chosen, we would not be able to continue that dialogue and development. Instead of seeing this as a parochial issue, we should see it as an opportunity to continue to support those who are economically inactive in the Glasgow area.

There have been successful initiatives. For example, in my constituency, the St Rollox initiative has been able to support economically inactive people by ensuring that they are employed locally. Moreover, we want to continue the excellent work of the Govan Initiative, which would find it difficult to operate under the different parameters that would be established were Braehead to be transferred to Renfrewshire Council.

I should also say that I do not recall being able to make representations on the boundary commission's proposals. I know that relevant MSPs had the opportunity to make

representations on the report's proposals; however, like Pauline McNeill, I do not remember any specific call for representations. I stand to be corrected by the minister, but I would welcome clarification on whose views were requested for the consultation.

I should point out that what is important is not the number of responses to a consultation, but their content. In their responses, elected members and community councils highlighted the historical fact that Renfrewshire had responsibility for Braehead, but we do not consider boundary proposals purely with regard to historical facts. If that was the only way in which we considered boundary proposals, we would face grave problems with respect to many of the parameters that are in place. We need the opportunity to continue the effective work that has been carried out within Glasgow's city boundary. The only way in which to do that is to select option A in the report and to agree to Gordon Jackson's motion.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): As an MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife, I will support Gordon Jackson's motion. I have no part in the parochial fighting that might have been going on between Glasgow and Renfrewshire. I recognise the importance of the independence of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland and believe that no decision to overturn a recommendation should be taken lightly.

If only one political party had been arguing the case, I would not support the motion, but members of all political parties have been arguing the case for Braehead to remain in Glasgow. That is why the matter should be considered by Parliament, which should take a view on it. I urge other committee members to consider their own views.

Aside from the argument for taking the issue before the Parliament, I found that there were strong and persuasive reasons why Braehead should remain in Glasgow. The word that best sums up the debate is "fairness". We should remember that 90 per cent of Braehead shopping centre lies in Glasgow, and that more than half the people who use it are from Glasgow.

Annabel Goldie said that Renfrewshire Council and other authorities should regenerate—of course they should. There is nothing to stop them doing so and such regeneration is to be welcomed. To be frank, however, the regeneration of such areas should not happen at Glasgow's expense. Glasgow has done a lot of work in developing and marketing Braehead, and the shopping centre will continue to be marketed as part of Glasgow. There are persuasive reasons for the Parliament's debating the issue; it will have an opportunity to vote on the matter. I am persuaded that Braehead should remain within the Glasgow boundary.

The Convener: We have a few minutes left. I will be delighted if another member wishes to speak.

John Young (West of Scotland) (Con): I should declare an interest: I was born, lived, was educated and worked in Glasgow. I was a Glasgow councillor for 35 years and I was leader of the City of Glasgow District Council for three years.

We seem to have omitted the question of population. Glasgow now has its lowest population since 1891. Between 1971 and this year there has been a decline by more than 250,000 inhabitants. If Glasgow declines, the whole west of Scotland suffers. On the other hand, the converse is also true in matters of this type. It is interesting to note that, on previous occasions—in 1912, 1926 and 1938—when Glasgow's population was in decline, Glasgow was given the opportunity to acquire various areas in and around the city. In those three years, which span a few decades, Glasgow acquired 14 areas from Renfrewshire.

I well understand the views of Renfrewshire Council, and a number of us have been inundated with its letters. I have not received letters from Glasgow City Council, but I have had verbal communication with council representatives. In some ways, I am glad that I do not have a vote today; I would be torn both ways because I can see the advantages and disadvantages in both points of view. The matter of Glasgow's population is crucial. Furthermore, we are perhaps now living in an era when strategic areas are most important, and the fact that we have a West of Scotland region is important.

I have no doubt about the fact that there is a general feeling in Glasgow that it will be grossly unfair if Glasgow loses the section of Braehead that is under discussion. The Renfrewshire people view the situation similarly from their perspective, and it might be that their feelings are shared in other parts of the West of Scotland. I can say only that I hope that the committee uses wisdom in this matter. I have sympathy with Gordon Jackson's view; the matter should be decided by the whole Parliament because it would be grossly unfair for seven members to have to make the decision, especially given the fact that only one member of the committee represents Glasgow and, of the rest, only one represents the West of Scotland.

16:15

Peter Peacock: I will try to pick up as many as I can of the points that have been made, although I will not have enough time to cover them all. Pauline McNeill said that she did not fully understand the logic behind the boundary commission's decision. I repeat: the boundary

commission and the councils were clear that there was an anomaly that had to be corrected. The commission was also clear that good governance of the area would be best served if all of the facilities and services were in one council area or another. After having listened to the cases that were made by the councils and having examined all the circumstances, the boundary commission did not think that there was a convincing case either way and resorted to other obvious ways of determining the boundary, which I have set out. That seems to be clear, logical and practical.

Johann Lamont pointed out that the key debate in Glasgow in relation to the cities review has not been about boundaries, but about working with others to build capacity in a variety of ways in order to maintain the energy of the city and to tackle its problems. She and a number of members raised a point about business rates, to which I will return in a second.

Nicola Sturgeon talked about the importance of retail tourism. I agree that it is important—it was a factor in consideration of the matter. However, she also made the point that people must work together across traditional boundaries in order to make bigger conurbations work. I point out that it would be bizarre if I decided—if I lived in the north of Scotland, Newcastle or the Borders—not to go to Braehead to spend my money because the Scottish Executive changed the administrative boundary. I accept the point about promotion, but that comes back to the wider point about how people can work together. Capital Shopping Centres, which has a clear commercial interest, obviously does not agree with Nicola Sturgeon's point about the Glasgow brand; it now supports the recommendation of the boundary commission.

A number of members talked about the finance system. Nicola Sturgeon pointed out that, as I said, the decision does not have a financial impact on Glasgow. A fundamental principle of the finance system is that councils have finance allocated to them on the basis of their need to spend to meet their communities' needs. In this case, that point is well illustrated. Glasgow will lose no income as a result of losing an element of non-domestic rates that it currently collects. That has been true of change in any industrial setting throughout Scotland for many years; for example, the closures of aluminium smelters and Ravenscraig. The finance system is designed to compensate to ensure that no area suffers because its economic base suddenly moves in a particular way.

Recently, the Local Government Committee reported on the treatment of non-domestic rates. Significantly, among the recommendations that the Scottish Executive is still considering there is no recommendation from the committee that there

should be a departure from the needs-based distribution system that has served Scotland well and that underpins the way in which the centrally allocated grant system must work. Ministers will have to keep that central to their thinking in relation to any distribution system.

Given the way in which cities are designated—one member mentioned Inverness, Stirling is about to join the ranks of cities, and claims are being made for city status for Paisley—and given the way in which economic performance varies over time and throughout Scotland, to tie ourselves to a particular view of non-domestic rates distribution as the only way of addressing city or city-region issues would appear to close off too many options. The Executive's policies to protect Glasgow from the population loss that John Young talked about mean that our grant system protects Glasgow far more than would any changes at the margins of non-domestic rates. We do not regard the finance question as material in this context.

Just as the issue has united parties in Glasgow, it has united parties outside Glasgow—Annabel Goldie and two SNP members agreed about it. Perhaps such unity happens more outside Glasgow than inside Glasgow—I will leave such speculation to others. Nonetheless, that shows that the issue concerns people's local perceptions of the rightness or otherwise of the boundary commission's recommendation and ministers' decisions. Members have been partial, depending on where they sit.

Bill Aitken mentioned the fact that no major review of boundaries will be undertaken, as I have made clear. He also asked how we would deal with a small review of a boundary. I tried to cover that in my opening remarks. We would send the matter to the boundary commission for a recommendation. That is the position in relation to the boundary that we are discussing. Glasgow City Council supported the boundary commission's considering the matter, which it did. We have considered the matter and a clear recommendation has been made, on which ministers have made a decision.

Paul Martin said that he did not recall being invited to comment. All that I can say is that the boundary commission's report says to whom and when the commission circulated information. The boundary commission received responses from some MSPs and MPs, which shows that at least some of that information got out. Also, the press contained adverts.

Paul Martin is right that it would be wrong to determine current boundaries on historic facts, but that has not been done in this case. The boundaries were determined by considering the obvious geographic and topographic features of

the area, given that the boundary commission had worked through all the other matters. Those boundaries were clearly delineated by the King George V dock, the river and the motorway. That was the basis of the recommendation and our decision, which we think will serve the area well.

Gordon Jackson: Having listened to members' comments, I appreciate that the issue becomes a parochial argument between Renfrewshire and Glasgow. People might have anti-Glasgow feelings or anti-Renfrewshire feelings, but I am still persuaded that matters of much broader principle are involved.

I listened to Peter Peacock and I do not question the integrity of the boundary commission or the commissioners. However, I am entitled to examine their reasoning and to discern why they did what they did. Eventually, Peter was open about the matter; the argument is simply geographical and topographical. He also told us that the commissioners considered all the arguments that we are making. Maybe they did, but maybe they did not, because I can find nothing of that in their reasoning.

With respect to Annabel Goldie, I heard the best argument on the merits of Renfrewshire's case from her. I do not doubt that Renfrewshire's case has merits, as has Glasgow's. I am saying that the decision was not made on the basis of those merits and should therefore not be proceeded with. It should not be proceeded with just because there is a dock here, a river there and it makes a nice wee line on a map, which is what the commission's argument comes down to. All I am saying is that if that is the reason for the decision, we should not make the decision now.

I stress to Fiona McLeod that I do not suggest the opposite idea or that anything that Renfrewshire has should be taken away from it, but the right time to make the decision is not when we are in the process of a cities review. I listened to Peter Peacock on that. He asked what the cities review matters in this, because the review will not consider boundaries. Maybe aye, maybe no.

I have Henry McLeish's statement, which says:

"No issues will be ruled out."

Who knows what developments will occur as the months and years roll on? Peter Peacock was right to say that the change would have no financial implications under current grant arrangements. Of course that is true, but who knows what will happen in future?

We are about to consider how we deal with cities. I have strong views on that. We need changes to Glasgow's structure that will meet its needs and provide financial stability. As I said, my colleagues might not agree with many of those

views. This is a melting-pot time for cities. It sends the wrong message to say to Glasgow and the country that we are having a great review of cities; that we are willing to plan; that we will work out how we will deal with rates and that perhaps we will reconsider boundaries but that—in the meantime—we will take a jewel in the crown of the west of Scotland, along with United Distillers and Vintners Ltd and Ikea, and change the boundary that covers it. I am not saying that the opposite should be done. I am saying that nothing should be done.

If Peter Peacock's best argument is topography—a word whose meaning half of us did not know until two days ago—it seems to me that we should think about the matter very carefully. I say to committee members who perhaps have more open minds than others that they should let the Parliament decide the issue. I am tempted to ask whether, if the instrument concerned their own constituencies, committee members would think it reasonable to come along and ask that the Parliament decide the matter. The instrument concerns a difficult issue, on which there are different points of view, and it raises many questions. There are perhaps a dozen people behind me who have different views. If committee members were to come along to me and say, "Look, will you let the Parliament decide?" would they think it reasonable if I said that I would not let the Parliament decide, despite the fact that there were such diverse views within the whole Parliament? What would they think if I was to say, "No, I want to decide it on my own"?

I do not, in asking members to change their decisions, ask them to take anything from Renfrewshire. I do not even ask members to take a decision that will mean that the statutory instrument is dead in the water. I say merely that not only is the instrument of parochial—and bigger than parochial—importance, but the way in which we deal with it is important. The issue concerns how we deal with cities and boundaries and the way in which the cities review will advance.

Annabel Goldie has a good argument; I believe that I have a good argument. The other 120-odd members should at least have a shot at hearing those arguments. Fundamentally, all that we ask is that the committee not force the decision now. The issue should not be decided without the Parliament deciding on it. On the basis that the Parliament should examine the issue, I invite committee members to support my motion. It will surprise no one that I insist on pressing the motion.

The Convener: The question is, that motion S1M-2957, in the name of Gordon Jackson, on the Glasgow City Council and Renfrewshire Council Boundaries (Braehead) Amendment Order 2002,

be agreed to. Is that agreed?

Members: No.

The Convener: There will be a division.

FOR

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Trish Godman (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab)
Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab)
Iain Smith (North-East Fife) (LD)

The Convener: The result of the division is: For 2, Against 5, Abstentions 0.

Motion disagreed to.

The Convener: We will have a five-minute break.

16:27

Meeting suspended.

16:40

On resuming—

Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Boundaries (Blackburn) Amendment Order 2002 (SSI 2002/154)

The Convener: We will now consider three negative instruments. The first is the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council Boundaries (Blackburn) Amendment Order 2002, which was sent to committee members on 28 March. We have not received any comments. In its report, a copy of which members have received, the Subordinate Legislation Committee did not consider that the attention of the Parliament need be drawn to the instrument. No motions to annul have been lodged and no other action can be taken on the instrument.

Mr Keith Harding (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Should not we be fair and have another hour and a half's debate on the instrument?

Elaine Thomson (Aberdeen North) (Lab): May I say something that is relevant? The instrument affects part of my constituency. As far as I know, everyone is perfectly happy with the proposed boundary change and is in agreement with it.

The Convener: Are we agreed that the Local Government Committee has no recommendation to make on the order?

Members indicated agreement.

**Argyll and Bute Council and West
Dunbartonshire Council Boundaries
(Ardoch Sewage Works) Amendment
Order 2002 (SSI 2002/155)**

The Convener: The Argyll and Bute Council and West Dunbartonshire Council Boundaries (Ardoch Sewage Works) Amendment Order 2002 was sent to members on 28 March and no comments have been received. The Subordinate Legislation Committee did not consider that the attention of the Parliament need be drawn to the instrument. No motions to annul have been lodged and no other action can be taken on the instrument. Are we agreed that the Local Government Committee has no recommendation to make on the order?

Members *indicated agreement.*

**City of Edinburgh Council and West
Lothian Council Boundaries (West Farm,
Broxburn) Amendment Order 2002 (SSI
2002/157)**

The Convener: The City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council Boundaries (West Farm, Broxburn) Amendment Order 2002 was sent to members on 28 March. The Subordinate Legislation Committee did not consider that the attention of the Parliament need be drawn to the instrument. No motions to annul have been lodged and no other action can be taken on the instrument. Are we agreed that the Local Government Committee has no recommendation to make on the order?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: Thank you. I close the meeting to the public.

16:43

Meeting continued in private until 17:12.

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