

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries Review Sub-Committee

Date of Meeting: 10th November 2011
Report of: Democratic and Registration Services Manager
Subject/Title: Boundary Commission for England: Parliamentary
Constituency Boundaries Review

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for England has the task of periodically reviewing all Parliamentary constituencies in England. A review is currently being undertaken and is being conducted in accordance with new rules laid down by Parliament. The Boundary Commission published its initial proposals for the North West on 13th September 2011. The consultation period ends on 5th December 2011.
- 1.2 Council at its meeting on 13th October 2011 agreed to delegate to the Constitution Committee the authority to determine the Council's response to the consultation. It has been agreed that the Council's formal response to the review will be provided in writing.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee agree a proposed response to the Boundary Commission for ratification by the Constitution Committee.

3.0 Wards Affected

- 3.1 All wards

4.0 Local Ward Members

- 4.1 All local ward Members

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 The Council's response to the review will define its policy and may influence the shape of Parliamentary Constituencies for the 2015 Parliamentary elections and beyond.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no identifiable financial implications.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Parliamentary Voting Systems and Constituencies Act 2011 imposes requirements upon the way in which the review will operate. The legislative basis of Parliamentary Constituency Boundary reviews is found in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992.

8.0 Risk Management

- 8.1 No risks would appear to arise from the recommendations of this report.

9.0 Background

- 9.1 A significant reduction in the number of Parliamentary Constituencies in England is proposed (from 533 to 522). These Constituencies are required to comply with new parameters so far as the numbers of electors they contain. The review will be heavily informed by public consultation.
- 9.2 The Boundary Commission must formally report to Government by 1st October 2013 and make recommendations on changes which it believes to be appropriate: in respect of the distribution, size, shape, name or designation of constituencies. These recommendations will then be converted into draft legislation, which will be implemented in time for the next Parliamentary Election after the date on which the legislation is passed.
- 9.3 The legislation provides that the electorate figures to be used for the 2013 review are the figures published on or before 1st December 2010. With regard to the local government boundaries which are to be taken into account as part of the review, the legislation defines these as those which were in force as at 6th May 2010.
- 9.4 Legislation requires there to be 600 constituencies for the whole of the UK, of which 68 have been allocated to the North West. The Boundary Commission in developing its proposals has allocated the specified number of constituencies within the relevant region, ensuring that each constituency is wholly contained within it. Wirral has been added to Cheshire to form a Cheshire and Wirral Sub - Region. Electors from Poynton have been included in the Greater Manchester Sub-Region, in a constituency for Poynton and Hazel Grove.
- 9.5 The legislation stipulates that every constituency must have an electorate range of between 72,810 and 80,473 electors.
- 9.6 The Boundary Commission may take into account other considerations:
- Geographical: size, shape and accessibility of constituencies

- Local government boundaries as at 6.05.2010
- Boundaries of existing constituencies
- Local ties that would be broken by constituency changes

9.7 With regard to local authority wards, these are seen as the basic building blocks for designing constituencies. They are regarded as well-defined and well-understood units which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. Any divisions of these units between constituencies is seen as being likely to break local ties, disrupt political party organisations and cause difficulties for Electoral Registration and Returning Officers. Therefore, in the absence of compelling and exceptional circumstances, the Boundary Commissions' view is that it would not be appropriate to divide wards where it is possible to construct constituencies that meet the statutory electorate range without doing so. As Cheshire East Council has recently undergone a Boundary Review in 2011, eight out of the 52 new wards are split between two constituencies by the initial proposals for the North West i.e:

- Leighton
- Wilmslow West and Chorley
- Wilmslow East
- Poynton West and Adlington
- Poynton East and Pott Shrigley
- Gawsworth
- Brereton Rural
- Prestbury and Tytherington

9.8 With regard to existing constituencies, the Boundary Commission intends to have regard to these as far as possible. Where constituencies remain largely the same, the Boundary Commission's policy is to retain the existing constituency name. In general, the policy is for constituencies to be named in a way which reflects the main population centres. However, where an alternative name commands greater local support than that proposed, the Boundary Commission will usually be prepared to recommend the alternative.

9.9 Following the consultation, Assistant Commissioners will consider all representations made and prepare a report on each region for the Boundary Commission. A notice will then be published in each region indicating whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals. Any revisions to the initial proposals will be subject to further consultation. Following consideration of any representations made at such further consultation, the Boundary Commission will make its final decision and report to Government. This will be followed by legislation.

10.0 The Council's response

- 10.1 At the request of the Constitution Committee, a briefing was arranged for all members on 19th October, following which all members were invited by email to submit their comments to Sub-Committee members for consideration which can be taken into account in formulating the draft response.
- 10.2 Following informal discussions with members of the Sub-Committee, officers will draw together some initial thoughts for consideration, which could, if agreed by Members, form the basis of a draft response to the Boundary Commission. It is proposed that the Council's response is centred around the adverse impact on the 8 new Borough wards, which are split between two constituencies under the initial proposals (as referred to above), with particular emphasis on objecting to the Boundary Commission's proposal for the former Poynton ward (comprising 11,080 electors) to be included in the Greater Manchester Sub-Region, in a Constituency for Hazel Grove and Poynton.
- 10.3 The Council's response will be strengthened if alternative proposals can be suggested, to ensure that the key criteria stipulated by the Boundary Commission (such as electorate range) can be met. Legal advice and discussions with the Boundary Commission have established that the Council is able to put forward a response which outlines the adverse impact that using the 2010 ward boundaries in Cheshire East will cause.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Mrs Lindsey Parton

Designation: Registration Service and Business Manager

Tel No: 01270 686477

Email: lindsey.parton@cheshireeast.gov.uk