

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

## **Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets**

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**Date of Meeting:** 2 December 2016  
**Report of:** Head of Governance and Democratic Services  
**Subject/Title:** Council Response to Parliamentary Boundary Review Consultation

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 This report reviews the Boundary Commission for England's initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in so far as they impact on parts of Cheshire East. The report outlines the possible basis of a response to the consultation exercise which closes on 5 December 2016.

### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 To agree the detail of the Council's response to the Parliamentary Boundary Review consultation and to authorise Officers to make the submission by the required deadline.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Boundary Commission published a consultation paper in September outlining a range of proposals to reduce the number of Parliamentary constituencies, taken along with similar proposals for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland it is proposed to reduce the size of the House of Commons from 650 to 600 seats.
- 3.2 The criteria imposed on the Boundary Commission are for the electorate for each constituency to be in a range of 71,031 to 78,507. These limits on the size of the electorate are far narrower than at present, and impose serious limitations on alternative configurations. The Boundary Commission has indicated that when possible those making submissions recognise the constraints imposed by the limits on electorates.
- 3.3 It is recognised that there is no perfect solution which would for example see all Cheshire East constituencies wholly contained within the Borough.
- 3.4 Whilst recognising that the limits on numbers impose quite severe limitations on the Boundary Commission, concern has been expressed that the proposals as they impact on Cheshire East would see some natural communities (e.g. Knutsford and Wilmslow) represented by two MPs, with the boundaries between the constituencies being seen as arbitrary.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

4.1 All.

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

5.1 All.

#### **6.0 Policy Implications**

6.1 None identified.

#### **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 No financial implications have been identified.

#### **8.0 Legal Implications**

8.1 No legal implications have been identified.

#### **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 No risks have been identified.

#### **10.0 Background and Options**

##### **Wilmslow**

- 10.1 Wilmslow is represented on Cheshire East Council by five elected Members representing four Wards. All Wards are currently in the Tatton constituency and have been for many years. Under the current proposals, Wilmslow Dean Row would become part of the Bramhall and Poynton Constituency, with the other Wards being in the new Macclesfield constituency. This proposal splits a distinctive and recognisable community which has its own sense of identity.
- 10.2 Wilmslow is a close knit, homogenous town, with a newly created Town Council which was created following a recent Community Governance Review. A clear outcome of the Review was that public opinion clearly saw the benefits of the whole town being represented by a single Town Council. It is suggested that the town should similarly be represented by a single Member of Parliament.
- 10.3 Handforth has close geographic and community links to Wilmslow and it is suggested that both should be in the same constituency. Wilmslow also has close links with Alderley Edge which under the current proposals would be in the new Macclesfield constituency. It is seen as important that all parts of the town of Wilmslow and its surrounding villages should remain united in one Parliamentary constituency to preserve essential local ties and community identities.

## **Knutsford**

- 10.4 Knutsford and its immediate environs are represented on Cheshire East Council by six elected Members representing four Wards (Knutsford, High Legh, Chelford and Mobberley). Under the current proposals Chelford would be in the Macclesfield Constituency with the other three being in Altrincham and Tatton Park. It is seen as imperative that all these wards should be in the same constituency.
- 10.5 Knutsford is a very historic Cheshire market town, together with its surrounding villages it looks to Cheshire for all local services, including hospitals, police, fire leisure and entertainment. It has thriving local schools, whose catchment areas extend to villages in the surrounding area; all part of Cheshire East.
- 10.6 The population of Knutsford do not see themselves as having any connection with Altrincham. Knutsford is a Cheshire town with a thriving rural hinterland. Altrincham has long been part of the wider much more urban Manchester conurbation, having transport links facing towards the city of Manchester.
- 10.7 There is a strong view in the town and its environs that Knutsford should appear in the name of any constituency in which the town of Knutsford is a constituent part. Tatton Park itself has extremely few electors and is more associated with a major visitor attraction rather than an identifiable geographic location.

## **Poynton**

- 10.8 It is regretted that under the current proposals the two Poynton Wards would be in a cross border constituency, with the majority of the electors being in Greater Manchester. However, it is recognised that the numbers required to meet the Boundary Commission guidelines makes this inevitable. It is gratifying to note that the two Poynton Wards have not been placed in different constituencies as they share a strong common identity. Cheshire East Council would not wish to see a split in any future proposals.

## **Relationship with Cheshire East Council**

- 10.9 As a local Council, Cheshire East values its links with its Members of Parliament, working hard to support them on issues of common concern and in the interest of Council Tax payers / constituents. This would be made far more difficult under the current proposals where the vast majority of the electorate in Altrincham and Tatton Park and Bramhall and Poynton would be in metropolitan, urban areas, rather than the more rural Cheshire East. Indeed, it is noted that under the current proposals over 42,000 Cheshire East electors would be in constituencies where most electors will live in Greater Manchester. This may have been exacerbated by the Boundary commission having to use Local Authority wards as their basic “building blocks”. Some Cheshire East wards, only recently created, have large populations and cover large geographic areas.

- 10.10 It is recognised that the majority of the proposed Eddisbury constituency would be in another local authority area, whilst this is not seen to be ideal, Cheshire West and Chester has a similar make up to Cheshire East and the contrasts would not be as great as in Altrincham and Tatton Park and Bramhall and Poynton.

### **Consultation**

- 10.11 The Boundary Commission have strongly recommended that individuals and organisations submit views by the closing date of 5 December 2016.

## **11.0 Access to Information**

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

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