

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting3rd November 2011

1. Title of Item/Report

Parliamentary Constituencies Review

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet was reminded that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 required there to be a fixed number of 600 constituencies for the UK, as opposed to the current 650. Within that the North East had been allocated 26 constituencies, as opposed to the current 29.

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) had recently produced initial proposals for England, which included those relevant to Stockton on Tees Borough area. Initial responses to the proposals had to be submitted to the BCE by 5 December 2011. Members had been provided with details of the proposals and there had been a Members' Policy Seminar held on Monday 10th October 2011 where views were canvassed. Further views were invited at two drop in sessions. The following principal comments, coming from those events, were considered to be:-

(i) General concern regarding the impact on community boundaries and the loss of community identities as a result of all the proposals.

(ii) The proposals would create four Members of Parliament for the Stockton Borough area. This would inevitably result in an increased use of the Council's resources than at present and would not, therefore, be cost effective.

(iii) The impact of the proposals at election time should not be underestimated. There would be voter confusion, with parts of the same communities voting for different Members of Parliament. The administration of elections for four different constituencies would be logistically complex and would require an increased use of resources.

(iv) In relation to the proposals for Hartlepool BC if the Billingham North ward was to remain a part of the proposed constituency, it was recommended that it be renamed Hartlepool and Billingham North BC.

However, there was widespread concern amongst residents and Members regarding the splitting of the Billingham wards and communities in this way. It was, therefore, recommended that Billingham North was retained with other Billingham wards, in any new, revised proposals.

(v) As regards the Middlesbrough BC, it was recommended that the constituency be renamed Middlesbrough and Thornaby BC

(vi) With regard to the Sedgefield and Yarm CC, the majority of the electorate would be Stockton Borough residents. The constituency should be a Stockton Borough, not County Constituency, administered by/on behalf of the Borough Council at elections. It was also recommended that it be renamed South West Stockton and Sedgefield BC

The Parkfield and Oxbridge ward was a Stockton Town Centre ward and should accordingly be retained as part of the new Stockton and Billingham BC (subject to the comments which follow regarding the name of that constituency).

(vii) In relation to the Stockton and Billingham BC, the reference to Billingham would be confusing given that, at present, it would not include the Billingham North Ward. It should, therefore, be renamed North Stockton BC. It should also include the Stockton Town Centre ward of Parkfield and Oxbridge.

Cabinet endorsed the above comments for submission to Council for consideration, subject to the following changes and suggested that they be accompanied by a statement highlighting the impact these proposals would have on local communities with illogical parliamentary boundaries being created in order to comply with the electoral quota requirement specified within the legislation, and with separate constituencies being formed and sometimes separated only by the width of the same street:-

-the comments at paragraph (iv) be inverted;
-paragraphs vi) and vii) be amended to delete reference to Stockton Town Centre Ward and instead to refer to the Parkfield and Oxbridge Ward being closely associated with the town of Stockton.

Members were reminded of the full consultation process, which included a second consultation period, the opportunity for revised proposals, and a final consultation period prior to the Final Recommendations and Report being published.

RECOMMENDED to Council that

1. The comments specified above and at paragraph 18 of the report regarding the initial proposals produced by the Boundary Commission for England form the Authority's formal representations, subject to:-

-an accompanying statement highlighting the impact these proposals would have on local communities with illogical parliamentary boundaries being created in order to comply with the electoral quota requirement specified within the legislation, and with separate constituencies being formed and sometimes separated only by the width of the same street;

-the comments at paragraph (iv) being inverted;

-paragraphs vi) and vii) being amended to delete reference to Stockton Town Centre Ward and instead referring to the Parkfield and Oxbridge Ward being closely associated with the town of Stockton

2. Subject to this, the Director of Law and Democracy be authorised to submit the agreed representations to the Boundary Commission for England before the deadline of 5 December.

3. A further report be submitted to Cabinet following the end of the initial consultation period.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that Members' views on the Boundary Commission's initial proposals were submitted prior to the end of the initial consultation period.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillor Cook declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in respect of this item as a result of his employment on behalf of a local Parliamentary M.P

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not applicable

Proper Officer
07 August 2011