

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM ____

REPORT TO CABINET

1 NOVEMBER 2012

REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Cook

PARLIMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES REVIEW

1. Summary

This report provides details of the revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries published by the Boundary Commission for England (“BCE”) on 16 October.

2. Recommendations

1. That the Cabinet report be considered.
2. Consideration be given as to whether any representations should be submitted to the BCE regarding their revised proposals.
3. Subject to this being considered, appropriate representations be agreed and recommended to Council.
4. A further report be submitted to Cabinet when the final consultation period has finished and the BCE has reported formally to Government.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

To ensure that Members’ views regarding the BCE’s revised proposals are submitted prior to the end of the final consultation period.

4. Members’ Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council’s code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member’s judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

COUNCIL DECISION

Leader of the Council - Councillor Cook

PARLIMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES REVIEW

SUMMARY

This report provides details of the revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries published by the Boundary Commission for England ("BCE") on 16 October.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Cabinet report be considered.
2. Consideration be given as to whether any representations should be submitted to the BCE regarding their revised proposals.
3. Subject to this being considered, appropriate representations be agreed and recommended to Council.
4. A further report be submitted to Cabinet when the final consultation period has finished and the BCE has reported formally to Government.

DETAILS

Background

1. Previous reports to Cabinet have explained that the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 ("the Act") requires the four Boundary Commissions to conduct a review of the parliamentary constituencies in their part of the UK and to submit final reports to Government before 1 October, 2013.
2. The Act requires there to be a fixed number of 600 constituencies for the whole of the UK (as opposed to the current 650). The number of constituencies allocated to England is 502 (including the two reserved for the Isle of Wight).
3. The BCE has subdivided the 500 England constituencies between the regions used for European Parliament elections.
4. The North East has been allocated 26 constituencies (currently it has 29). The BCE's initial proposals have ensured that each of these constituencies are wholly contained in the North East region.

5. The BCE is also required by the Act to ensure that each constituency has an electorate that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota. This quota has been calculated at 76,641. Accordingly, each constituency must have an electorate that is no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473.

The Initial Proposals

6. Representations on the BCE's initial proposals were agreed by Council at its meeting on 1 December 2011.
7. The representations were as follows:-
 - (i) There is general concern that the restrictions imposed by the legislation, specifically the proposed reduction in the number of MPs from 650 to 600 and the requirement for each Constituency to have an electorate that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota, will cause significant problems locally, with illogical parliamentary boundaries being created and constituencies sometimes being separated only by the width of a particular street.
 - (ii) Specific concerns regarding the impact on community boundaries and the loss of community identities as a result of all of the proposals.
 - (iii) The proposals will create four Members of Parliament for the Stockton Borough area. This will inevitably result in an increased use of the Council's resources than at present and will not, therefore, be cost effective.
 - (iv) The impact of the proposals at election time should not be underestimated. There will be voter confusion, with parts of the same communities voting for different Members of Parliament. The administration of elections for four different constituencies will be logistically complex and will require an increased use of resources.
 - (v) There is widespread concern amongst residents and Members regarding the splitting of the Billingham wards and communities as a result of the proposals for Hartlepool BC and for Stockton and Billingham BC. It is, therefore, recommended that the Billingham North Ward is not included in the proposed Hartlepool BC and that it is retained with other Billingham wards, in any new, revised proposals.
 - (vi) If the Billingham North ward is however to remain a part of the proposed Hartlepool BC, it is recommended that the constituency be renamed Hartlepool and Billingham North BC.
 - (vii) As regards the **Middlesbrough BC**, it is recommended that the constituency be renamed Middlesbrough and Thornaby BC
 - (viii) With regard to the **Sedgefield and Yarm CC**, the majority of the electorate will 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 is also recommended that it be renamed South West Stockton and Sedgefield BC

The Parkfield and Oxbridge ward is closely associated with the Stockton Town Centre area 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).

- (ix) In relation to the **Stockton and Billingham BC**, the reference to Billingham will be confusing given that, at present, it will not include the Billingham North Ward. It should, therefore, be renamed North Stockton BC. It should also include the Parkfield and Oxbridge Ward, given its close association with the Stockton Town Centre area.

Secondary Consultation Period

8. The review entered a secondary consultation phase on 6 March 2012. This concluded on 3 April 2012. The secondary consultation allowed interested parties to submit further comments on the representations received by the BCE on their initial proposals.
9. At its meeting on 8 March, Cabinet agreed that the Council's original representations should be reaffirmed for the purposes of the secondary consultation period. This was done and the decision to do so, in consultation with the Mayor, was reported to Council on 2 May 2012.

Revised Proposals

10. The BCE published revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries on 16 October.
11. The details affecting the administrative area of Stockton-on-Tees are detailed at the **Appendix** to the report.
12. Cabinet is asked to consider whether any representations should be made to the BCE on these revised proposals. It has been suggested, for instance, that as regards the proposed Stockton North and Aycliffe Constituency, given the respective sizes of the electorate of the Billingham, Stockton and Aycliffe/Sedgefield wards, the name of the Constituency should be Stockton North, Billingham and Aycliffe.
13. If so, appropriate representations could be referred to Council on 28 November, for consideration.
14. The final consultation period on the revised proposals concludes on 10 December 2012. This final consultation will not include any public hearings, nor is there an opportunity for commenting on the representations of others.

Final Recommendations and Report

15. The BCE will consider any representations made during the final consultation period about the revised proposals and will make its final decisions about whether further revisions are needed in light of these representations.
16. Once the BCE has decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it will then draft and submit a formal report to Government. The report, which will be published, will contain a description of the review in each region, a textual description of all of the final recommendations, and a set of maps to illustrate the existing constituency boundaries and those proposed by the final recommendations.
17. The submission of the formal, final report will conclude the review process.

18. A further report will be presented to Cabinet once this stage has been reached.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

19. There are no financial or legal implications arising directly from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The report is considered to be a low risk category report.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

21. Enhancing democratic representation and local democracy is a key feature of the Council Plan.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

22. An assessment has not been considered necessary for the purpose of this report.

CONSULTATION

23. As before, all Members of the Council will be advised of this report. The BCE has previously provided details of the revised proposals for publication, and these are accessible at various locations throughout the Borough.

Director of Law & Democracy

Contact Officer: David E Bond

Telephone No: 01642 527061

E-mail: david.bond@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Not applicable

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The report affects all wards

Property Implications:

Not applicable