

**AGENDA ITEM**  
**REPORT TO COUNCIL**  
**28 NOVEMBER 2012**  
**REPORT OF CORPORATE**  
**MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES REVIEW**

**SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to secure Council's agreement to the comments which will be submitted to the Boundary Commission for England regarding its revised proposals for new parliamentary constituencies for the Stockton-on-Tees Borough area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the comments specified at paragraph 12 of the report to Council regarding the revised proposals published by the Boundary Commission for England be agreed as the Authority's formal representations in relation to those proposals, and that
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 consultation deadline of 10 December 2012.

**DETAIL**

**Background**

1. Previous reports 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 Boundary Commission for England ("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 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. Copies of the revised proposals are accessible at: [www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland](http://www.independent.gov.uk/boundarycommissionforengland)
11. The details affecting the administrative area of Stockton-on-Tees are set out at **Appendix 1** to this report.
12. At its meeting on 1 November 2012 Cabinet considered the revised proposals and indicated that the following representations should be submitted to the BCE:-
- (i) As regards the proposed Stockton North and Aycliffe Constituency, given the respective sizes of the electorate of Billingham, Stockton and Aycliffe/Sedgefield wards, it is considered that the name of the Constituency should be Stockton North, Billingham and Aycliffe.
  - (ii) The administration of and "lead local authority" role for parliamentary elections for the new constituencies of Stockton North, Billingham and Aycliffe and Stockton South should continue to be the responsibility of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
13. The report to Cabinet is accessible at:-
- <http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab14.pl?operation=SUBMIT&meet=101&cmte=CAB&grpId=public&arc=71>

and the relevant Cabinet minute is attached at **Appendix 2** to this report to Council.

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 those 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 Members 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 have been advised of the BCE's revised proposals.

### **Director of Law & Democracy**

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<u>Background Papers:</u>	Not applicable
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	The report affects all wards
<u>Property Implications:</u>	Not applicable