

CABINET MEETING – 2nd NOVEMBER 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART 1

Title of Report:

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES – INITIAL PROPOSALS

Author:

Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:

This report outlines the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the review of Parliamentary constituencies in Sunderland.

Description of Decision:

To note the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the review of Parliamentary constituencies in Sunderland.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

The Boundary Commission for England is an independent and impartial non departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.

The BCE has the task of periodically reviewing all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

None.

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? No

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Management

REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES – INITIAL PROPOSALS**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report outlines the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the review of Parliamentary constituencies in Sunderland.

2. DESCRIPTION OF DECISION

- 2.1 To note the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) for the review of Parliamentary constituencies in Sunderland.

3. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The BCE is conducting a review of Parliamentary constituencies in England on the basis of new rules laid down in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. The Act states that there will be 600 constituencies in the United Kingdom, a reduction of 50 from the present number. Each constituency must have an electorate that is within 5% of the electoral quota of 76,641 and a constituency cannot have fewer than 72,810 electors or more than 80,473 electors.
- 3.2 The legislation states that the BCE may also take into account
- special geographical considerations, including the size shape and accessibility of a constituency
 - local government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010
 - boundaries of existing constituencies and
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies
- 3.3 However, none of these factors can override the absolute necessity to achieve an electorate within each constituency that is within the range allowed.
- 3.4 The BCE has decided to conduct the review on a regional basis, although this is not a legal requirement and on 13 September it published its initial proposals for each of the 9 English regions.
- 3.5 The North East region, with an electorate of 1,971,249, currently has 29 Parliamentary constituencies which the BCE proposes to reduce to 26.
- 3.6 In making its recommendations, the BCE is also required by the Act to specify a name for each proposed constituency. The BCEs policy on the naming of constituencies is that, when constituencies remain largely unchanged, the existing constituency name should usually be retained. The BCE considers that the name should normally reflect the main population centre(s) contained in the constituency, though if a suitable alternative name is proposed which generally commands greater support locally the BCE will usually be prepared to recommend that alternative.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Sunderland currently has 3 Parliamentary constituencies which are coterminous with the city boundary. Sunderland Central constituency contains the 9 local government wards of Barnes, Fulwell, Hendon, Millfield, Pallion, Ryhope, St Michaels, St Peters and Soutwick. Houghton and Sunderland South constituency contains the 8 local government wards of Copt Hill, Doxford, Hetton, Houghton, St Chads, Sandhill, Shiney Row and Silksworth. Washington and Sunderland West constituency contains the 8 local government wards of Castle, Redhill, St Annes, Washington Central, Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West.
- 4.2 The BCE have proposed the following constituencies for Sunderland. Houghton le Spring constituency with an electorate of 78,342 containing 9 local government wards of Copt Hill, Doxford, Hetton, Houghton, Ryhope, St Chads, Sandhill, Shiney Row and Silksworth. Sunderland constituency with an electorate of 76,770 containing 9 local government wards of Barnes, Fulwell, Hendon, Millfield, Pallion, Redhill, St Michaels, St Peters and Southwick. The BCE have also proposed a Washington constituency with an electorate of 74,642 which contains 9 local government wards (7 from Sunderland and 2 from Gateshead MBC) Birtley, Lamesley, Castle, St Annes, Washington Central, Washington East, Washington North, Washington South and Washington West.
- 4.3 The BCE is consulting on the above initial proposals until 5 December 2011 and during this period there will also be two public hearings at Newcastle 14/15 November and Darlington 17/18 November.
- 4.4 The BCE is then required to publish all the representations it receives on its initial proposals. It is likely that this will probably take place in Spring 2012 and there will be a 4 week period for further representations. If, as a result, the BCE decides to change its initial proposals, it must publish revised proposals which will be the subject of a further 8 week consultation (towards the end of 2012). The BCE must make its final recommendations to Government by 1 October 2013. The BCEs recommendations will be used at the General Election in 2015.
- 4.5 The BCE stress that in making representations, respondents should bear in mind the tight constraints placed on them by Parliament, in particular the rule about staying within 5% of the electoral quota, as well as the Commissions own decisions to avoid crossing regional boundaries and to use local government wards as the building blocks of constituencies.
- 4.6 The BCE is looking for views structured round two questions
- do you agree in view in full, in part or not at all with our initial proposals for the North East region? and
 - what are your alternatives for areas you disagree with that meet the statutory quota?

5. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 5.1 Members are asked for their views on whether the Council should submit a response to the BCEs initial proposals for the Parliamentary constituencies in Sunderland.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 There are no alternative options.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Boundary Commission for England – A Guide to the 2013 Review.
Boundary Commission for England – North East Region Initial Proposals.

