

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Review of Parliamentary Constituencies 3 November 2016

Report of Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To enable the Committee make a response to the Boundary Commission for England's (BCE) consultation on proposals for changing the Parliamentary Constituencies.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee considers the attached draft response to the consultation on the proposed Parliamentary Constituency boundaries for submission to the Boundary Commission for England.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on 28 September 2016, Councillors were informed of that the BCE had published its first draft of proposals for new Parliamentary Boundaries. The proposals affected the two constituencies currently administered by Lancaster City Council.
- 1.2 Council resolved to make a response as a Council on the administrative issues that would arise from delivering elections on the proposed boundaries, noting that political groups and individual Councillors would still be able to make their own responses if they wished. Council delegated responsibility for agreeing the response to Council Business Committee.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Boundary Commission for England is an independent public body which has responsibility for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 2.2 A Parliamentary boundary review considers the arrangements that already exist and makes recommendations for changes that might be needed to ensure that all constituencies comply with legal requirements. Constituencies need to be broadly equal whilst taking into account factors such as community ties. Based on the 1 December 2015 electorate, every new constituency should have no fewer than 71,031 and no more than 78,507 electors.

- 2.3 The North West region has been allocated 68 constituencies, which is a reduction of 7 from the current 75. The initial proposals will seek a reduction across England from 532 to 499.
- 2.4 The Boundary Commission is currently consulting on its proposals and the attached response (Appendix A) has been drafted to deal with the Council's administrative role in Parliamentary elections. It does not address any other aspects and therefore individual Members or political groups may wish to make their own responses. This initial consultation ends on 5 December 2016 and there will be two further phases of consultation in 2017, as the review progresses.

3.0 What the proposals mean for the Lancaster district

- 3.1 The district is currently covered by two constituencies: Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood.
- 3.2 Morecambe and Lunesdale is contained wholly within the Lancaster district boundary and is made up of a total of 18 wards. Lancaster and Fleetwood is made up of 9 Lancaster wards and 8 wards from Wyre Borough Council.
- 3.3 The first stage proposals see the creation of two new constituencies, with a huge shift in boundaries. Firstly, there is the creation of a Lancaster and Morecambe Constituency. This would be made up of 18 wards contained entirely within the Lancaster district boundary and would have a total electorate of 74,361.
- 3.4 The remaining Lancaster district wards would be included in a larger, new North Lancashire Constituency. This would be made up of wards from 4 local authority areas. Lancaster would have 9, Preston 2, Ribble Valley 10 and Wyre 8. The total electorate is 71,284.
- 3.5 Maps of the two proposed constituencies are appended (Appendix B), along with maps of the current constituencies (Appendix C), and a list of wards in both the current and proposed constituencies (Appendix D).
- 3.6 Administratively, it is likely that Lancaster would only be responsible for administering the Lancaster and Morecambe constituency as it is contained wholly within the Lancaster district boundary.
- 3.7 The responsibility for the administration of the North Lancashire Constituency is not yet known. Apparently this is not a matter for the BCE, but is a Cabinet Officer decision. Officers think that it is likely to fall to Wyre Borough Council as they would have the highest electorate in that constituency (based on the 1 December 2015 electorate). The proposals will provide distinct challenges for the four authorities included within that boundary, mainly caused by the geographic spread of the constituency.

4.0 Details of Consultation

- 4.1 The initial 12 week consultation period ends on 5 December 2016.
- 4.2 The Elections Manager has been consulted in the preparation of this report, as the officer who arranges the practical management of elections in the

district and as the lead officer working with other authorities where constituency boundaries extend beyond our own district.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Members are asked to consider the draft consultation response with a view to approving a final version for submission to the Boundary Commission for England.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Parliamentary Elections are funded by the Cabinet office, not the City Council.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources: None

Information Services: None

Property: None

Open Spaces: None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been involved in drafting this report in her role as Democratic Services Manager.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

BCE Consultation docs and supporting materials for the 2018 review are all available on the website:

<https://www.bce2018.org.uk/>

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Ref:

Lancaster City Council's draft response to the Boundary Commission's consultation on its revised proposals for the Lancashire Sub-Region.

The two constituencies which are currently administered by the Returning Officer at Lancaster City Council are Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood. The council's comments are confined to the proposals to change the constituency arrangements affecting the Lancaster City Council area and it has no particular views on the proposals which affect the rest of the North West.

The council believes that it would be expected to administer the new constituency of Lancaster and Morecambe as it would be contained wholly within the Lancaster district boundary. The majority of the wards contained within this Constituency have a reasonably static population, but there are also areas which could see growth in elector numbers in the future (for example Poulton and Harbour wards which presently have a high transient population). There are also wards which see a high yearly turnover of electors because they have a high off-campus student population (John O'Gaunt and Castle).

The Council is concerned, however, that the proposed new North Lancashire Constituency is too geographically spread across communities served by four local authorities.

The arrangements for administering the area would be challenging and complex, with 38 of Lancaster's 105 polling stations being included in the new Constituency. There would have to be close liaison with all local authorities within the Constituency, who would also have another Constituency in their area.

Although each local authority delivers their own successful elections, there are local practices in matters such as ballot box content and deviation from this can cause confusion amongst even the most experienced staff.

Planning and managing the verification and counting of votes will be extremely complicated, and will be further complicated when scheduled polls become combined (for example with local and parish elections). Delivery of the ballot boxes to a central count location will be time consuming, will be at increased risk and is likely to cause a delay to the completion of the verification of votes which may in turn delay the declaration of a result.

The North Lancashire Constituency also includes the University and Scotforth Rural Ward, which includes the whole campus of the University of Lancaster. Electorate in this ward fluctuates greatly.

The Council would prefer to see a Constituency made up of wards in no more than 2 local authority areas. This would simplify the administrative arrangements and has already been proven as efficient with existing constituencies.