

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Review of Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary Commission Consultation on Initial Proposals**

**10 November 2011**

### **Report of Head of Governance**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The Boundary Commission for England is consulting on its initial proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency boundaries. This report informs the Committee of changes which are proposed to both constituencies administered by the City Council and asks Members to agree and approve a response to the Commission's consultation. The response deals specifically with the Council's administrative role in regard to elections.

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HEAD OF GOVERNANCE**

- (1) That the Committee consider the attached draft response to the consultation on proposed Parliamentary Constituency boundaries for submission to the Boundary Commission for England, noting that the response focuses only upon the Council's administrative role in Parliamentary elections.

##### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for England is an independent non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 1.2 The Commission is currently conducting a review on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 502) and require that every constituency, apart from two specified exceptions, must have an electorate that is 5% either side of the electoral quota of 76,641 (this means no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473,).
- 1.3 The North West region has been allocated 68 constituencies, a reduction of seven from the current arrangement, and the proposals leave only seven of the 75 existing constituencies unchanged.
- 1.4 The Boundary Commission is currently consulting on its proposals and the attached response 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. These can be emailed direct to the Commission at:-

[northwest@bcommengland.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:northwest@bcommengland.x.gsi.gov.uk)

## **2.0 What the Proposals mean for Lancaster district**

- 2.1 The district is currently covered by two constituencies: Morecambe and Lunesdale, comprising 19 wards contained wholly within the area served by Lancaster City Council, and Lancaster and Fleetwood, comprising the remaining 9 wards in the area served by Lancaster City Council, plus eight wards within the area of Wyre Borough Council.
- 2.2 The proposals are to extend the Morecambe and Lunesdale constituency to 20 wards to include the lower Lune Valley ward which is currently part of the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency. There is a proposal to replace the Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency with a Lancaster constituency which would contain the remaining eight wards in Lancaster district plus ten wards in the Borough of Wyre, two wards in the City of Preston and five wards in the Borough of Ribble Valley. Maps of the two proposed constituencies are appended (Appendix A) along with maps of the current constituencies for reference (Appendix B) and lists of all the wards in both the proposed and current constituencies (Appendix C).
- 2.3 Administratively, the proposals for change in Morecambe and Lunesdale will not pose any problems. The proposals for the new Lancaster constituency will be more challenging, as it covers an area served by four different local authorities. The next Parliamentary Election is due to be held in May 2015, which is also the date when Lancaster City Council, Ribble Valley Borough Council and Wyre Borough Councils will hold City/Borough and Parish elections and Preston City Council will hold City Council elections for a third of its seats.

## **3.0 The Consultation**

- 3.1 The 12 week consultation period ends on 5 December 2011. The Commission' consultation particularly asks for respondents to answer four questions:-
- Do you agree in full, in part, or not at all with their initial proposals for the North West region;
  - Which sub-regions do you agree with and why;
  - Which sub-regions do you disagree with and why; and
  - Can you propose alternatives for areas you disagree with that meet the statutory rules they set out in their "Initial Proposals" report.

## **4.0 Details of Consultation**

- 4.1 The Elections Manager has been consulted in the preparation of this report, as the officer who would arrange the practical management of elections in the district, in particular, leading on liaison with other local authorities where constituency boundaries extend beyond our own district.

## 5.0 Options and Options Analysis

	<b>Option 1:</b> Agree that the response, as drafted, be sent to the Boundary Commission.	<b>Option 2:</b> Agree that the response, amended to include the Committee's amendments or comments, be sent to the Boundary Commission.	<b>Option 3:</b> Do not agree or send a response to the Boundary Commission.
Advantages	Allows the views of the Council, who administer Parliamentary polls and counts, to be submitted.	As Option 1 and reflecting any further points raised by the Committee.	None identified.
Disadvantages	None identified.	None identified.	Loss of the opportunity to respond to the proposals.

## 6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 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 Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly arising from this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly arising from this report. Any costs relating to a parliamentary election are met by central government.

### **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 consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Boundary Commission's "Initial Proposals" report, which can be viewed at:-  
[www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk](http://www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk)

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**Lancaster City Council's draft response to the Boundary Commission's consultation on its initial proposals for the Lancashire sub-region.**

*Do you agree in full, in part, or not at all with the initial proposals for the North West region? Which sub-regions do you agree with and why? Which sub-regions do you disagree with and why?*

The two constituencies which are administered by the returning officer at Lancaster City Council are Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood (named Morecambe and Lunesdale County Constituency and Lancaster County Constituency in the new proposals). The Council's comments are confined to these two constituencies within the Lancashire sub-region and it has no particular views on the proposals which affect the rest of the North West.

*Can you propose alternatives for areas you disagree with that meet the statutory rules set out in the "Initial Proposals" report?*

The ideal solution, administratively, would be to form one new constituency based on the area covered by Lancaster City Council. It is clear, however, that this would be too large for the electoral quota of 76,641. An alternative convenient administrative arrangement would be two constituencies within the area covered by the Council, but these would be too small.

The Council is concerned that the area proposed for the new Lancaster County Constituency is spread across communities served by four local authorities. The previous Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency required close liaison between elections officers in Lancaster City Council and Wyre Borough Council. This complicated the arrangements for polling and for the counting of votes. The proposed area will mean close liaison between elections officers in Lancaster City Council and three other district councils: Wyre Borough, Ribble Valley Borough and Preston City. Therefore planning and managing the voting process and the verification and counting of votes will be extremely complex. In addition to this, the next Parliamentary election will be held on the date that elections are due for Lancaster City Council and its parishes; Wyre Borough Council and its parishes; Ribble Valley Borough Council and its parishes and one third of the seats at Preston City Council.

The Lancaster County constituency proposed would greatly complicate the administration of elections. The Council would prefer to see a Lancaster Constituency made up of wards within the Lancaster City Council area and Wyre District Council only, to simplify the arrangements at election time and continue the working relationship between the two districts that has been in existence for the last four Parliamentary Elections.