

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Review of Parliamentary Constituencies – Boundary Commission Consultation on Revised Proposals

8 November 2012

Report of Head of Governance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Boundary Commission for England is consulting on its revised 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 (Appendix A) to the consultation on the revised 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 Members will recall that, late last year, the Commission published proposals for the North West region and this Committee approved a consultation response which was submitted to the Commission in November 2011. Since that date, the Commission has reviewed its proposals in light of the consultation responses and published revised proposals on 16 October 2012.

- 1.4 The Boundary Commission is currently consulting on its revised 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

2.0 Background - the current position and the Commission's initial proposals

- 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 initial proposals put forward by the Commission last year were 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 was 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. The consultation response approved by this Committee pointed out that the proposal for the new Lancaster constituency would be challenging administratively, as it covered an area served by four different local authorities; Lancaster City Council; Ribble Valley Borough Council, Wyre Borough Council and Preston City Council. The proposals put forward for changes to the Morecambe and Lunesdale boundaries did not pose any particular administrative issues.

3.0 The revised proposals

- 3.1 The proposals for the Morecambe and Lunesdale boundaries still stand, they have not been revised. They are shown at Appendix B. The boundaries of the proposed Lancaster constituency have changed (Appendix C) and the Commission has also revised the name of the proposed constituency to Lancaster and Wyre.
- 3.2 Although the proposals for the Lancaster and Wyre Constituency have been revised, they will be almost as challenging to administer as the initial proposals. The proposed constituency is made up of wards served by three different local authorities, Lancaster City Council (8 wards), Wyre Borough Council (10 wards) and Preston City Council (3 wards). The next parliamentary election is due to be held in 2015, which is also the date when Lancaster City Council and Wyre Borough Council will hold City/Borough and Parish elections and Preston City Council will hold elections for one third of its seats. The draft response makes a suggestion for a Lancaster and Wyre Constituency which would be within the required electoral quota parameters.
- 3.3 The Commission's eight week consultation period on the revised proposals ends on 10 December 2012.

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

	Option 1: Agree that the response, as drafted, be sent to the Boundary Commission.	Option 2: Agree that the response, amended to include the Committee's amendments or comments, be sent to the Boundary Commission.	Option 3: 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.

<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p>
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None.

<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p>

None directly arising from this report.

<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p>

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

<p>OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</p>

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 "Revised Proposals" report, which can be viewed at:-
www.consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers
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E-mail: dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk
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 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 and Wyre 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.

The Council was concerned that the Commission's initial proposals for a new Lancaster County Constituency were spread across communities served by four local authorities. The revised proposals are a slight improvement, in that the area now involves three rather than four local authorities. However, this is still a very complex arrangement for polling and for the counting of votes. The proposed area will mean close liaison between elections officers in Lancaster City Council and two other district councils: Wyre Borough, and Preston City. Therefore planning and managing the voting process and the verification and counting of votes will be extremely complicated. 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 and for one third of the seats at Preston City Council.

The Lancaster and Wyre County constituency proposed would greatly complicate the administration of elections. The Council would re-iterate its comments to the Commission on its initial proposals that it would prefer to see a Lancaster Constituency made up of wards within the Lancaster City Council area and Wyre Borough Council only. An example of this, which would achieve the required electoral quotas, is shown below.

Replace the three Preston Wards (total electorate 14,351) with three Wyre Wards (Staina 4,910; Bourne 5,125 and Carleton 3,327) adjoining the revised proposals for the Lancaster and Wyre CC. This proposal would give a total electorate of 74,981 for the Lancaster and Wyre CC.

A constituency which is based on an area administered by two rather than three local authorities would simplify the arrangements at election time and continue the working relationship between Lancaster City Council and Wyre Borough Council that has been in existence for the last four Parliamentary Elections.