

Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

28 September 2016

Report of the Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the method of responding to the Boundary Commission for England's Review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That Council designates Council Business Committee as the body to respond in writing on behalf of the Council to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) regarding its Review of Parliamentary Constituencies at each stage of the consultation process.**
- (2) That Councillors note that political groups, individual Councillors and any individuals or organisation have been invited by the BCE to submit their views throughout the process either by writing or orally at public hearings.**

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In February 2016, the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) announced the start of its review of the Parliamentary Constituencies in England. The review must, according to rules laid down by Parliament, result in a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 502). The BCE is required to report to Parliament in September 2018 and has published the Guide for its review, which can be found on the website here: <http://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/guide-to-the-2018-review-published/>

2.0 Consultation Process: Initial Stage

- 2.1 Initial Proposals for new boundaries were published by the BCE on 14 September 2016 and a twelve week period of consultation is in progress. A summary of the effect of the proposals on the two constituencies covered by Lancaster City Council (Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood) is appended.
- 2.2 A new statutory framework has resulted in a significant change to the BCE's consultation process. The 2018 review is being carried out under a new

procedure that relies on a combination of written representations and oral representations at public hearings. There will be public hearings in Lancaster at the Auditorium at The Storey on 24 and 25 October 2016. These meetings are not inquiries, public meetings or debates but are there to provide an opportunity for the BCE to explain its initial proposals and for people to give their views on those proposals. The BCE has stated that it will attach just as much significance to representations made in writing through its website as to those made orally at public hearings and that the content of the representation is more important than the form it takes. Most importantly, objectors to the BCE's proposals are strongly advised to say what they propose in place of their proposals.

3.0 Consultation Process: Second – and Possible Third - Stage

- 3.1 As soon as possible after the initial consultation the BCE will publish all of the representations, and records of public hearings, on its website. After that, there is a further statutory four week period during which people can submit written comments on the representations. There are no public hearings at this stage.
- 3.2 The BCE will then publish a report for each region stating whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals. If there are revisions, there will be a further eight week period of consultation on the revised proposals for the region and publication of any representations made will take place when the final report is published. The BCE will submit a formal written report to the Government and that will conclude the review process. The procedure to implement new constituencies is the responsibility of Government and Parliament.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Some of the options open to Council are shown below:-
 - a) **Not to make a response at all as a Council but leave it to political groups and individual Councillors to respond as they wish and for the Returning Officer to respond on the practicalities of the proposals for administering elections.**
An opportunity to raise issues as a Council would be missed with this option.
 - b) **To make a written response as a Council on the administrative issues that arise for delivering elections on the proposed boundaries. (Political groups and individual Councillors can still make their own responses as they wish.)**
This option would allow Members to flag up particular issues as a Council, which may pose practical difficulties at election time. It would also allow groups and individual councillors to raise any political issues in their own responses.
 - c) **To make a written response as a Council on the proposals in general. (Political groups and individual Councillors can still make their own responses as they wish.)**
The Council's political composition may mean that a response under this option would be difficult to agree, since there are bound to be political ramifications with any proposals for boundary changes.

The officer recommended option is b) and that Council Business Committee, the Committee authorised to make consultation responses on behalf of the

Council, be asked to agree the responses at each stage.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

None directly arising from this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

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 drafted this report in her role as Democratic Services Manager.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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REVIEW OF PARIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

The effect of the proposals on the two constituencies currently covered by Lancaster City Council (Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood) is discussed below.

The proposals published by the Boundary Commission for England on 13 September 2016 seek the reduction of the number of constituencies in Lancashire from 16 to 14.

Morecambe and Lunesdale and Lancaster and Fleetwood Constituencies would cease to exist in their current form.

The proposal looks to create a Lancaster and Morecambe Constituency which will comprise the following City Council wards:

Bare, Bolton & Slyne, Bulk, Castle, Harbour, Heysham Central, Heysham North, Heysham South, John O'Gaunt, Marsh, Overton, Poulton, Scotforth East, Scotforth West, Skerton East, Skerton West, Torrisholme, Westgate.

The remaining City Council wards will form part of a new North Lancashire Constituency. As well as 2 wards from Preston, 10 from Ribble Valley and 8 from Wyre, the following wards would be included:

Carnforth and Millhead, Ellel, Halton-with-Aughton, Kellet, Lower Lune Valley, Silverdale, University and Scotforth Rural, Upper Lune Valley, Warton.

Constituencies are proposed on the basis of electorate. Constituencies should have no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507. The electorate for the proposed constituencies would be

Lancaster and Morecambe – 74,361
North Lancashire – 71,284

Although it is expected that Lancaster City Council would administer the Lancaster and Morecambe Constituency, it is unclear at this stage which of the four local authorities within the new North Lancashire Constituency would have responsibility for administering elections for that constituency.