

2018 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

Governance Committee - 3 November 2016

Report of Chief Officer Corporate Services

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Council - 22 November 2016

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) are required to conduct a review of the Parliamentary constituencies in the UK and make recommendations, to be published in September 2018, that reduces the number of constituencies in England to 501 (from 533).

Their initial proposals have an impact on the wards that make up the Sevenoaks District and it is recommended that the Council responds to BCE's consultation.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Firth

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Recommendation to Governance Committee:

That Council be recommended to:

- (a) Note the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England for Parliamentary boundaries for the Sevenoaks District Council area; and
- (b) Approve that the council submits a consultation response to the Boundary Commission for England based on the views collated from Members as set out at Appendix B to this report to be agreed with the Chairman of the Governance Committee.

Recommendations to Council:

- (a) The Boundary Commission for England proposals for Parliamentary boundaries for the Sevenoaks District Council area are noted; and
 - (b) It is approved that the council submits a consultation response to the Boundary Commission for England based on the views collated from Members as set out at Appendix B to this report to be agreed with the Chairman of the Governance Committee.
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Reason for recommendation: To ensure that Members views on the initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries for the wards they represent are reported back to the Boundary Commission for England.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England
- 2 The BCE are currently conducting a review, on the basis of rules set by Parliament in 2011. These rules require the BCE to make recommendations to reduce the number of Parliamentary constituencies in the UK and make more equal the number of electors in each constituency. These recommendations will be published in September 2018.
- 3 Following the guidance of Parliament the final proposals must result in a reduction in the number of constituencies in England to 501 (from 533), and require that every constituency - apart from two covering the Isle of Wight - must have an electorate that is no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507.
- 4 As well as the primary rule that constituencies must have no fewer than 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507, the legislation also states that, when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may also take into account:
 - special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015;
 - boundaries of existing constituencies; and
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.

Initial proposals

- 5 The BCE published their initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England on 13 September 2016. For the South East region just under 18% of the existing constituencies are retained - the remainder are new constituencies
- 6 The proposals for the Parliamentary constituency boundaries for the wards that make up the Sevenoaks District are set out at Appendix A to this report.
- 7 Currently 20 wards fall within the Sevenoaks Parliamentary constituency, 5 wards within the Tonbridge & Malling constituency and 1 ward within the Dartford constituency.
- 8 Under the BCE's initial proposals:

- 19 of the 20 wards within the Sevenoaks Parliamentary constituency remain. These are joined by three wards from the district of Tonbridge & Malling.
- Ash and New Ash Green is proposed to move from the Sevenoaks constituency to become part of the Gravesham constituency. They are proposed to be joined in the Gravesham constituency by Hartley & Hodsoll Street (which is currently in the Dartford constituency).
- The five wards which are currently in the Tonbridge & Malling constituency are all proposed to be part of the Tunbridge Wells constituency.

Consultation

- 9 The BCE are currently consulting on their initial proposals for a 12-week period, which started on 13 September 2016 and will end on 5 December 2016. The BCE are encouraging respondents “to use this opportunity to help us shape the new constituencies - the more views we hear, the more informed our decisions will be when considering whether to revise our proposals”.
- 10 To inform the Council’s response to the initial proposals a survey was sent to all Members welcoming their views on the proposals for the ward they represent. The survey was sent to Members on 7 October and was open for almost two weeks, closing on 20 October.
- 11 There were 19 responses to the survey which are provided for Members information at Appendix B to this report.
- 12 It is recommended that the views of Members are considered and used to inform a response to the BCE’s consultation.
- 13 Members may wish to note that the BCE is required to publish all the responses they receive on their initial proposals. This is likely to occur in Spring 2017 and will coincide with a further four week consultation period on the comments that have been received.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 14 None. However, Members may choose to not respond to the BCE’s consultation.

Key Implications

Financial

- 15 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation to note the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England’s Parliamentary constituency review or to respond to their consultation.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

- 16 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendation to note the initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England's Parliamentary constituency review or to respond to their consultation.
- 17 There is a risk to the Council that if no consultation response is given the potential for the BCE to review their initial proposals may be reduced.

Equality Assessment

- 18 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

- 19 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) are required to conduct a review of the Parliamentary constituencies in the UK and make recommendations, to be published in September 2018, that reduces the number of constituencies in England to 501 (from 533).
- 20 Their initial proposals have an impact on the wards that make up the Sevenoaks District and it is recommended that the Council responds to BCE's consultation, based on the views of Members collected through a survey run during October 2016.
- 21 They Council may choose not to respond however this would create a risk that the potential for the BCE to review their initial proposals may be reduced.

Appendices

Appendix A - Proposals for the Sevenoaks District

Appendix B - Responses to Members consultation

Background Papers:

Boundary Commission for England initial proposals for the South East

<https://www.bce2018.org.uk/node/6488>

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Chief Officer Corporate Services