

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) – 7th July 2021
Cabinet – 15th July 2021
Council – 21st July 2021

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader – Councillor R Fuller

Report by: Elections & Democratic Services Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) have published initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England on 8th June 2021. This publication marked the start of an eight-week period of consultation on the BCE's initial proposals ending on 2nd August 2021.

The BCE are inviting comments on the proposals to capture the views and knowledge of local residents to ensure that the proposals take account of local ties and best reflect the geography on the ground.

The initial proposals for the Eastern region have resulted in an allocation of 61 constituencies and the impact in Huntingdonshire is the splitting of the District across three Parliamentary constituencies.

Recommendation:

The Council is

RECOMMENDED

to consider whether they wish to make any representations or comments to the Boundary Commission for England on the initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies affecting Huntingdonshire.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the initial proposals as set out by the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England and specifically draw Members' attention to the proposed impact within Huntingdonshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 8th June 2021 the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) published initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The BCE have responsibility for reviewing the boundaries of all Parliamentary constituencies in England. The BCE must make recommendations for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries by 1st July 2023.
- 2.2 The overall number of constituencies across the UK will be retained at 650, with the resultant impact in England of increasing the number of constituencies from 533 to 543. The rules require that every recommended constituency across the UK, apart from five specified exceptions, must have an electorate that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.
- 2.3 The electorate figures that are used for the review are the Parliamentary electors on the electoral register on 2nd March 2020.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The publication of the initial proposals commenced the start of an eight-week consultation period and the BCE have requested comments by 2nd August 2021. Details of the full Guide to the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies published by the BCE are available on the Commission's website, together with an interactive mapping of the proposals at www.bcereviews.org.uk
- 3.2 The BCE are asking for views on the initial proposals, specifically giving consideration to using wards as the basic building blocks for designating constituencies and therefore any proposed changes. Other factors that may be taken into account are –
- any special physical geographical considerations, (size, shape and accessibility) such as rivers and major roads;
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies and the inconveniences associated with such changes.
- 3.3 In the naming of a constituency, the BCE generally considers that the existing constituency name, if largely unchanged, remains the same and that the name should normally reflect the main populations centre(s) contained in the constituency.

4. PROPOSALS FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

- 4.1 The initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the Eastern region are attached as Appendix A to this report. The Eastern region has been allocated 61 constituencies, an increase of three from the current number. In Cambridgeshire (comprising the county of Cambridgeshire and unitary authority of Peterborough) it is proposed to maintain a pattern of constituencies wholly contained within the boundary of the county.
- 4.2 In terms of the impact in Huntingdonshire, there is a new proposed St Neots constituency that includes all four District wards covering St Neots and the District wards of Great Paxton and Fenstanton, all currently located within the Huntingdon constituency. The map of the proposed St Neots constituency is attached at Appendix B.
- 4.3 The electorates of the existing Huntingdon constituency (85,109) and North West Cambridgeshire constituency (95,684) are significantly above the permitted range for the new proposed constituencies. This has meant that the proposals include the transferring of the District wards of Holywell-cum-Needingworth, Somersham, Warboys and Sawtry from the existing North West Cambridgeshire constituency to the proposed Huntingdon constituency. No further changes are proposed to northern part of the North West Cambridgeshire constituency. Maps of the proposed Huntingdon constituency and North West Cambridgeshire constituency are attached at Appendices C and D respectively.

5. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 5.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be circulated ahead of the Cabinet meeting.

6. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The BCE are required to make a formal final report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before 1st July 2023.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The full Guide to the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies published by the BCE details the process for developing proposals. Following this initial consultation period, there then follows a secondary consultation period that will include public hearings in each region. This period will allow further representations to be made on the initial proposals. The BCE will then develop and publish revised proposals for further consultation and will then make final decisions and recommendations for the Government to consider and will take effect at the next General Election.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The law governing Parliamentary constituency reviews and redistribution can be found under the provisions of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992, the 2011 Act and the 2020 Act).

9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 9.1 The consultation period by the BCE commenced on 8th June 2021 and the closing date for submissions is 2nd August 2021.
- 9.2 Members are requested to consider whether they wish to make any representations or comments to the BCE on the initial proposals for changes to the Parliamentary constituencies affecting Huntingdonshire.

10. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- Appendix A – Boundary Commission for England: Initial Proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the Eastern region – June 2021
- Appendix B – St Neots County Constituency map proposal
- Appendix C – Huntingdon County Constituency map proposal
- Appendix D – North West Cambridgeshire County Constituency map proposal

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Boundary Commission for England: Guide to the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies – May 2021

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