

Committee: Council

Agenda Item

Date: 26 July 2016

13

Title: 2018 Review of Parliamentary Boundaries

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Item for decision

Summary

1. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has announced the start of the review of Parliamentary constituencies in England. The BCE is required to report to Parliament in September 2018.
2. Initial proposals for new boundaries are scheduled for publication on Tuesday 13 September. There will follow a series of short public hearings and written representations can be made within a period of 12 weeks.
3. It is proposed to refer consideration of the BCE's initial proposals to the Electoral Working Group for consideration. If the review timescales allow, the proposed response to the review proposals, insofar as they affect the existing Parliamentary constituency arrangements for Uttlesford, will be referred back to Council for approval.

Recommendations

4. Invite the Electoral Working Group to consider the initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in England, due to be published by the BCE on 13 September 2016 and prepare the Council's response to the review proposals.

Financial Implications

5. *None. There are no costs associated with the recommendation. Officer time has been factored in to service plans.*

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None, except for reports and guidance already published.

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	Full consultation is already built into the review process set by the BCE. Further
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	local consultation will be undertaken as appropriate.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

8. The commencement of the review of Parliamentary boundaries was announced by the BCE in February 2016. The guide for the review has now been published. The full timetable for events, including a programme of public hearings, has yet to be announced but the BCE has stated its intention to publish initial proposals for consultation on 13 September. The final report is required to be completed and submitted to Government during September 2018.
9. The rules relating to Parliamentary boundaries were substantially changed by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. They will involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from the present number to 501, two of which must be allocated to the Isle of Wight.
10. Using the same division of England as for European Parliament elections, the mathematical formula used has resulted in the allocation of 57 constituencies to the Eastern region. The BCE's proposals will therefore allocate this number of constituencies to the Eastern region, including Essex.
11. Members will recall there was a blocked attempt to review Parliamentary boundaries under the 2011 Act during the period of the coalition government prior to 2015. Had those proposals been implemented, Uttlesford would have been divided between parts of three new constituencies. At present the Saffron Walden constituency includes the whole of Uttlesford together with four wards of Chelmsford City.
12. It is proposed that the Electoral Working Group be asked to consider the initial review proposals and prepare a suitable response to the public consultation for approval.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
1 – that new constituency arrangements are detrimental to the interests of the district in terms of Parliamentary representation	2 – because of the way the 2011 Act operates, there is a high probability of fragmentation of the district between two or more constituencies	2 - the impact would be, post implementation of the review proposals, that the council would be required to make representations to two or three MPs instead of one as at present	Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to counter proposals considered detrimental to the district's interests as proposed changes to constituency boundaries would impact on most or all other proposed constituencies across the Eastern region, or at least on all other proposed constituencies within Essex. It would require a great deal of work to prepare an alternative set of proposals designed to keep Uttlesford intact within one constituency. The availability of the time and expertise to prepare alternative proposals is limited.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.