

Committee: Full Council

Agenda Item

Date: 8 December 2016

11ii

Title: 2018 Review of Parliamentary Boundaries

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Item for decision

Summary

1. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has published its initial proposals for new constituency boundaries. The twelve week consultation period closes on 5 December 2016 and we are invited to comment on the proposals insofar as they affect the Uttlesford district.

Recommendations

2. The Electoral Working Group recommends to Full Council that the proposals for new constituency boundaries in Essex are welcomed and a suitable response is sent to the BCE's consultation. [Note: the consultation closes on 5 December so that an interim response will be sent by this date subject to confirmation by Council.]

Financial Implications

3. None

Background Papers

4. 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.

Documents already published on the BCE website.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	The consultation is being undertaken by the BCE
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

6. A review of Parliamentary boundaries is being undertaken by the BCE in accordance with rules set by Parliament in 2011. The rules require the BCE to make recommendations for new constituency boundaries in September 2018. They will result in a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 501. Each constituency, based on the number of registered electors in December 2015, must have an electorate between a range of 71,031 and 78,507 electors.
7. The proposals are published individually for each of the nine regions of England. For the Eastern region the impact is that 57 constituencies have been allocated which is a reduction of one from the current number. For Essex, the number of constituencies is reduced from 18 to 17.
8. The specific proposal for the Saffron Walden constituency (including the whole of Uttlesford) is that it is proposed to import four wards of Braintree constituency (all in Braintree district) in exchange for the existing four wards from the City of Chelmsford which are proposed to be moved to the Brentwood and Ongar constituency instead. This proposal can be illustrated as follows:
 - Bumpstead ward, 2,285 electors
 - Rayne ward, 2,203 electors
 - Three Fields ward, 4,480 electors
 - Yeldham ward, 2,110 electors
 - All Uttlesford district wards, 61,702
 - Saffron Walden constituency, total electorate = 72,780
9. As stated above, the Chelmsford wards of Boreham and The Leighs (4,691), Broomfield and The Walthams (6,367), Chelmsford Rural West (2,181), and Writtle (4,151) will be moved to the proposed Brentwood and Ongar constituency.
10. Given that the size of the Uttlesford district is too small to form a constituency without the addition of wards from an adjoining district, the best possible outcome seems to be that Uttlesford is retained intact without being divided between two or more constituencies, as would have been the case had the previous review of boundaries gone ahead. Exchanging wards from Braintree for wards of Chelmsford City does seem a satisfactory outcome and does

retain the community of parishes in Uttlesford within a single seat that will continue to be represented by one M.P.

11. In terms of the administration of elections, this is more straightforward if electors are being imported into the constituency being administered rather than simultaneously being imported and exported as this involves a flow of data between more than two local authorities and introduces complications involving the use of polling stations, the recruitment, appointment and training of polling staff, and becomes especially complicated if other elections are being combined on the same day as a Parliamentary election, particularly if those polls involve the election of councillors in adjoining local authorities.
12. Transport links between the Braintree wards to the east of Uttlesford and Saffron Walden are undoubtedly inferior to links with the Chelmsford City wards that presently form part of the Saffron Walden constituency. However, in all other respects the mainly rural and dispersed Braintree wards appear to have more commonality of interest with the general character of the Uttlesford district. If the proposals are confirmed it will restore the link between the Uttlesford wards and at least some of the area intended to be transferred to the new constituency that applied prior to the pre 2010 boundary changes.
13. The Council is being recommended to submit a representation to the BCE endorsing the proposed constituency changes insofar as they affect the Uttlesford district and the Saffron Walden constituency.

Risk Analysis

14.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
1 The BCE's proposals have been published and there is a period of consultation in progress so that everyone wishing to comment is able to do so.	The consultation period will ensure that all comments will be considered.	The impact will be fairly minimal in terms of preparing for and administering Parliamentary elections as liaison will continue to be required with one adjoining local authority.	Good liaison will be needed with electoral officers at Braintree District Council.

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.

