

Committee: Full Council

**Date: 7 December
2017**

Title: Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

**Author: Peter Snow, Democratic and Electoral
Services Manager, 01799 510430**

Item for decision:
yes

Summary

1. Revised proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England were published by the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) on 17 October 2017. The eight-week consultation period runs until 11 December. The BCE will send their recommendation to Parliament in September 2018. If then implemented, the new boundaries will come into force at the following general election (in 2022?).
2. The proposals affecting Uttlesford are set out in the paper covering the Eastern region and are described in more detail in the situation section of the report. The Governance, Audit and Performance Committee is recommending the Council to support what is being proposed for the revised Saffron Walden constituency.

Recommendations

3. Submit a formal representation to the BCE supporting the revised proposals for the Saffron Walden constituency.

Financial Implications

4. None.

Background Papers

5. The only papers referred to by the author in the preparation of this report are already published on the BCE's website.

Impact

- 6.

Communication/Consultation	Consultation is already carried out by the BCE
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal	No specific implications other than those

Implications	relating to the administration of elections
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

7. The BCE is conducting a periodic review of all Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England. The review is being carried out on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 501.
8. This is the second stage of consultation as the initial proposals were published in September 2016. As far as Saffron Walden is concerned, the second stage proposals are unchanged from those published originally which the Council supported. There are some changes elsewhere in Essex.
9. The impact of the enforced change in the Eastern region is a reduction of one seat from 58 to 57. Within the Eastern region, Essex is being treated as a sub-region in its own right entitled to 17 constituencies giving an average constituency electorate of 74,976. At present, Essex has an allocation of 18 constituencies so the reduction of one does result in some significant boundary changes.
10. The effect of the rules governing the periodic review is that all constituencies must include at least 71,031 electors and no more than 78,507.
11. The proposed Saffron Walden constituency includes the whole of the Uttlesford district, together with four wards from the Braintree district. These four wards (listed below) replace the four wards of Chelmsford City included in the existing constituency. Most of the territory included in the Braintree district wards proposed for inclusion in Saffron Walden was part of the former Saffron Walden constituency until 2010.
12. The proposed constituency is made up as follows:
 - All wards of Uttlesford district – 61,702 electors
 - Bumpstead ward of Braintree district – 2,285 electors
 - Rayne ward of Braintree district – 2,203 electors
 - Three Fields ward of Braintree district – 4,480 electors
 - Yeldham ward of Braintree district – 2,110 electors
 - Constituency electorate – 72,780 electors

13. The four Braintree wards listed above replace Broomfield and The Walthams (6,367 electors) and Chelmsford Rural West (2,181) which are being dispersed to Brentwood and Ongar constituency; Writtle (4,151) moved to Billericay constituency; and Boreham and The Leighs (4,691) moved to Witham and Maldon.
14. In considering the Council's response to the consultation, the most important factors seem to be the community of interest shared by the wards included in the proposed seat, and the effective administration of Parliamentary elections based on the proposed boundary.
15. In terms purely of administration it is a big advantage for the whole of Uttlesford to be included within a single constituency. It is also good in terms of social cohesion and means that we have to liaise with only one MP in making representations to the Government, or in dealing with constituents. As there are not enough electors in Uttlesford to form a single constituency, at least 10,000 electors must be imported from elsewhere to form a constituency of the required size.
16. The 17,390 electors in the four Chelmsford City wards have been exchanged for 11,078 electors from Braintree. In terms of community of interest, the replacement wards do seem to fit quite closely with the generally rural makeup of Uttlesford. A further advantage is that many electors in the four wards concerned will have some memory of voting in the Saffron Walden constituency prior to 2010.
17. It seems true to say that many electors in the four Chelmsford City wards have not adjusted to being moved to vote in the Saffron Walden constituency and may feel more at home in a new constituency area. Having said that, none of the Chelmsford City electors concerned will be included in a Chelmsford based seat and it is likely their distribution between three different new seats will continue to cause some confusion.
18. The new constituency boundary abuts the town of Braintree but the composition of the area is essentially rural. The existing seat boundary extends as far as Broomfield which effectively forms part of the urban extension of Chelmsford.
19. In considering this matter, the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee agreed that the exchange of Saffron Walden constituency wards between Chelmsford and Braintree will be a satisfactory arrangement making for a better overall fit with the Uttlesford district. Members are invited to consider supporting that decision.

Risk Analysis

20.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
1 – no risks are foreseen	1 – this is the second stage of consultation	1 – there will be some community impact	1 – ensure that a full response to the consultation is made

- 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.