

Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

Report of head of legal and democratic services

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To: Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

DATE: 17 October 2016



Review of parliamentary constituencies

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee:

- (a) considers whether it wishes to support the initial proposals for the Oxfordshire sub-region;
- (b) agrees to request the BCE consider amending the constituency boundaries to reflect the Local Government Boundary Commission for England related alteration order.

Purpose of Report

1. This report sets out details of the above review and invites the committee to make representations to the Boundary Commission for England (BCE).

Strategic Objectives

2. The report does not specifically relate to any of the council's strategic objectives.

Background

3. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 makes provision for a reduction in the number of parliamentary constituencies (members of parliament) from 650 to 600. 501 of these constituencies will be in England. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is responsible for reviewing constituencies and drawing up proposals, with a view to submitting its formal report on the review to parliament in 2018. If agreed the changes will be implemented at the first general election after the approval of proposals by parliament currently scheduled for 7 May 2020. The initial consultation closes on 5 December 2016. There will be a further two rounds of consultation in 2017. Following the conclusion of all three

consultation periods, the BCE will look at all the evidence received and make final recommendations to parliament in September 2018.

The review

4. One of the objectives of the review is to ensure that constituencies fall within a defined “electoral quota” to ensure there is broad equality in the number of electors represented by each Member of Parliament (MP). The electoral quota for each constituency is 74769; no constituency shall be more than 105% of that figure, nor less than 95% of it (i.e. all constituencies must have an electorate in the range of 71031 to 78507). The review is based on the electorate at 1 December 2015.
5. The BCE’s initial proposals were published on 13 September. Publication of the initial proposals is followed by a statutory consultation period of twelve weeks. The BCE will hold a series of public hearings, at which interested persons will be able to give views. These are *“not inquiries, public meetings or debates, but are there to provide an opportunity both for BCE to explain its initial proposals and for people to give their views on those proposals”*. BCE also states that it *“attaches just as much significance to representations made in writing as to those made orally at public hearings”*. In the South East, five two day public hearings have been scheduled, at various locations and in the period between 20 October and 4 November. Details of the hearings are available on the BCE website. The nearest hearing will take place in Oxford on 24 and 25 October.
6. The 12 week consultation period on the initial proposals ends on 5 December 2016. As soon as possible after the close of consultation, BCE will publish all representations received, together with transcripts of all the public hearings. This is followed by a further statutory four week period during which interested persons may submit written comments on the representations made in the initial 12 week period. Subsequently, BCE will publish notice of whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals. If the proposals are revised, then there is a further eight week period for written representations to be made relating to the revised proposals.
7. Following this, BCE will submit a formal written report to the government. Parliamentary procedures will then apply for agreeing and implementing the new constituencies. As mentioned above, the changes will become effective at the next general election following this process.
8. BCE is very clear in saying that *“an objection accompanied by a viable counter-proposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection”* and that a counter proposal *“setting out the composition of each constituency in an area will generally be viewed as more persuasive than a proposal for the composition of only one constituency which does not address any knock-on effects on the electorate figures of other constituencies”*.

Current Situation in Oxfordshire

9. The current electorate information for Oxfordshire is summarised as follows:

Electorate at 1/12/15		Difference from Electoral Quota			Within range?
		(Min)	(Max)	(Quota)	
		(71031)	(78507)	(74769)	
Banbury CC	85,398	14367	6891	10629	No
Henley CC	72,682	1651	-5825	-2087	Yes
Oxford East BC	70,293	-738	-8214	-4476	No
Oxford West and Abingdon CC	73,647	2616	-4860	-1122	Yes
Wantage CC	80,859	9828	2352	6090	No
Witney CC	78,455	7424	-52	3686	Yes

10. As can be seen, the current Banbury, Oxford East, and Wantage constituencies all fall outside the required electorate range referred to in paragraph 4 above.

BCE initial proposals

11. BCE's initial proposals provide for changes to the current constituencies covering Vale of White Horse (Oxford West and Abingdon and Wantage).
12. The Commission's initial proposals are reproduced below from the BCE initial proposals document relevant to Oxfordshire:

"Initial proposals for the Oxfordshire sub-region

77. There are currently six constituencies in the County of Oxfordshire. We are proposing no change to the number of constituencies.

78. Three of the existing constituencies (Henley, Oxford West and Abingdon, and Witney) have electorates within 5% of the electoral quota. Of the remaining three constituencies, Banbury and Wantage have electorates above the 5% limit and Oxford East is below the 5% limit.

79. We considered whether we could leave unchanged any of the three existing constituencies that have an electorate within 5% of the electoral quota. We propose no change to the constituency of Witney.

80. To reduce the electorate of the existing Banbury constituency, which is too large, we propose to transfer the wards of Fringford, Launton, and Ambrosden & Chesterton (located in the Borough of Cherwell) to our renamed Henley and Thames constituency. As we have altered the existing Banbury constituency, we propose to rename the constituency Banbury and Bicester to reflect the names of the two largest towns. Our proposed Henley and Thames constituency extends further north than the existing Henley constituency. It extends up to, but does not include, the town of Bicester. In the south of our Henley and Thames constituency, we propose that it includes the ward of Wallingford from the existing Wantage constituency and, to ensure the constituency remains within 5% of the electoral quota, we propose to transfer the wards of Wheatley, Garsington & Horspath, and Sandford & The Wittenhams to our Oxford West and Abingdon constituency. The inclusion of these wards also reflects changes to the local government ward boundaries in the District of South Oxfordshire.

81. The existing Oxford East constituency currently has an electorate below 5% of the electoral quota. In order to increase the number of electors in this constituency, we propose to include the wards of North and St. Margaret's (located in the City of Oxford) in our Oxford East constituency.

82. In order to reflect changes to local government ward boundaries in the District of the Vale of White Horse, we propose that the whole of the Thames ward be included in our Wantage constituency."

13. The appendix to this report sets out the initial proposals showing details of the proposed constituencies and the district/city wards proposed to be included in each.

14. When the BCE consulted on proposed changes in 2011 Council resolved, at its meeting on 19 October 2011, to make the following representations:

"That Council believes that the current proposal by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission to place Radley in a future Henley Constituency is fundamentally flawed. Radley has nothing in common with the proposed new Henley and is physically separated from it by the Thames, with no direct road connection whatsoever. This Council believes that if a rebalancing in the number of electors is required to equalise the new constituencies, then this would be better achieved by transferring another suitably sized area. This would leave Radley as an integral part of its present constituency. Council resolves to make representations accordingly".

15. As can be seen from the current proposals Radley is not included in the proposed new Henley and Thame constituency.

16. Paragraph 80 of the BCE's initial proposals document states that the proposals reflect the changes to the local government ward boundaries made under 'The Vale of White Horse (Electoral Changes) Order 2014' and implemented at the local elections in May 2015. However, the proposals do not take account of the anticipated changes to district ward boundaries to be made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England under a related alteration order. These changes, requested by this council, will make changes to the boundaries of district wards and county divisions to reflect changes made at parish level following the community governance review completed in 2014 and implemented on 1 April 2015 under the Vale of White Horse District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2015.

17. Officers recommend the committee alerts the BCE to the making of this order and asks it to amend the proposals to reflect the changes to district ward boundaries.

Financial Implications

18. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

19. There are no legal implications arising from the current consultation.

Risks

20. There are no discernable risks associated with the decision whether to submit any views during this consultation stage.

Conclusion

21. The BCE has published its initial proposals for parliamentary constituencies. The committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to make representations on the initial proposals.

Background Papers

BCE Guide to the 2018 Review, available at

<http://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>

BCE Initial Proposals for the South East, available at www.bce2018.org.uk/

**2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies
Initial Proposals of the Boundary Commission for England**

Constituency	Ward	District/City	Electorate
Banbury and Bicester			78,250
	Adderbury	Cherwell	2,317
	Banbury Calthorpe	Cherwell	3,974
	Banbury Easington	Cherwell	6,076
	Banbury Grimsbury and Castle	Cherwell	6,821
	Banbury Hardwick	Cherwell	5,911
	Banbury Neithrop	Cherwell	3,869
	Banbury Ruscote	Cherwell	5,606
	Bicester East	Cherwell	4,307
	Bicester North	Cherwell	4,601
	Bicester South	Cherwell	3,630
	Bicester Town	Cherwell	3,784
	Bicester West	Cherwell	5,467
	Bloxham and Bodicote	Cherwell	5,250
	Caversfield	Cherwell	2,087
	Cropredy	Cherwell	2,268
	Deddington	Cherwell	2,163
	Hook Norton	Cherwell	2,063
	Sibford	Cherwell	2,161
	The Astons and Heyfords	Cherwell	3,756
	Wroxton	Cherwell	2,139
Henley and Thame			77,517
	Ambrosden and Chesterton (currently in Banbury)	Cherwell	3,005
	Fringford (currently in Banbury)	Cherwell	1,887
	Kirtlington	Cherwell	2,346
	Launton (currently in Banbury)	Cherwell	2,256
	Otmoor	Cherwell	1,967
	Benson & Crowmarsh	South Oxfordshire	5,716
	Berinsfield	South Oxfordshire	2,846
	Chalgrove	South Oxfordshire	2,643
	Chinnor	South Oxfordshire	6,118
	Forest Hill & Holton	South Oxfordshire	2,688

Constituency	Ward	District/City	Electorate
Henley and Thame (contd)			77,517
	Goring	South Oxfordshire	2,991
	Haseley Brook	South Oxfordshire	3,062
	Henley-on-Thames	South Oxfordshire	8,318
	Kidmore End & Whitchurch	South Oxfordshire	2,789
	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	5,214
	Thame	South Oxfordshire	8,847
	Wallingford (currently in Wantage)	South Oxfordshire	5,625
	Watlington	South Oxfordshire	2,955
	Woodcote & Rotherfield	South Oxfordshire	6,244
Oxford East			76,914
	Barton and Sandhills	Oxford	4,614
	Blackbird Leys	Oxford	3,790
	Carfax	Oxford	1,926
	Churchill	Oxford	3,715
	Cowley	Oxford	3,937
	Cowley Marsh	Oxford	3,982
	Headington	Oxford	3,843
	Headington Hill and Northway	Oxford	3,109
	Hinksey Park	Oxford	3,717
	Holywell	Oxford	1,573
	Iffley Fields	Oxford	3,645
	Littlemore	Oxford	4,305
	Lye Valley	Oxford	4,327
	Marston	Oxford	4,232
	North (currently Oxford West and Abingdon)	Oxford	2,936
	Northfield Brook	Oxford	4,081
	Quarry and Risinghurst	Oxford	4,418
	Rose Hill and Iffley	Oxford	4,235
	St. Clement's	Oxford	3,767
	St. Margaret's (currently Oxford West and Abingdon)	Oxford	2,965
	St. Mary's	Oxford	3,077
Oxford West and Abingdon			75,606
	Kidlington North	Cherwell	3,973

Constituency	Ward	District/City	Electorate
Oxford West and Abingdon (contd)			75,606
	Kidlington South	Cherwell	6,112
	Yarnton, Gosford and Water Eaton	Cherwell	4,047
	Jericho and Osney	Oxford	4,040
	Summertown	Oxford	4,197
	Wolvercote	Oxford	4,281
	Garsington & Horspath (currently in Henley)	South Oxfordshire	2,752
	Sandford & the Wittenhams (currently in Henley)	South Oxfordshire	2,880
	Wheatley (currently in Henley)	South Oxfordshire	3,023
	Abingdon Abbey Northcourt	Vale of White Horse	4,333
	Abingdon Caldecott	Vale of White Horse	5,083
	Abingdon Dunmore	Vale of White Horse	4,545
	Abingdon Fitzharris	Vale of White Horse	4,616
	Abingdon Peachcroft	Vale of White Horse	5,178
	Botley & Sunningwell	Vale of White Horse	4,240
	Cumnor	Vale of White Horse	4,645
	Kennington & Radley	Vale of White Horse	5,081
	Wootton	Vale of White Horse	2,580
Wantage			75,312
	Cholsey	South Oxfordshire	6,597
	Didcot North East	South Oxfordshire	6,805
	Didcot South	South Oxfordshire	7,104
	Didcot West	South Oxfordshire	4,663
	Blewbury & Harwell	Vale of White Horse	4,583
	Drayton	Vale of White Horse	2,274
	Faringdon	Vale of White Horse	5,362
	Grove North	Vale of White Horse	3,998
	Hendreds	Vale of White Horse	2,151
	Kingston Bagpuize	Vale of White Horse	2,555
	Marcham	Vale of White Horse	2,158
	Ridgeway	Vale of White Horse	2,355
	Stanford	Vale of White Horse	2,654
	Steventon & the Hanneys	Vale of White Horse	2,444
	Sutton Courtenay	Vale of White Horse	2,086

Constituency	Ward	District/City	Electorate
Wantage (contd)			75,312
	Thames	Vale of White Horse	2,534
	Wantage & Grove Brook	Vale of White Horse	5,138
	Wantage Charlton	Vale of White Horse	4,764
	Watchfield & Shrivenham	Vale of White Horse	5,087
Witney			78,455
	Alvescot and Filkins	West Oxfordshire	1,367
	Ascott and Shipton	West Oxfordshire	1,713
	Bampton and Clanfield	West Oxfordshire	2,877
	Brize Norton and Shilton	West Oxfordshire	1,549
	Burford	West Oxfordshire	1,467
	Carterton North East	West Oxfordshire	3,806
	Carterton North West	West Oxfordshire	3,260
	Carterton South	West Oxfordshire	3,295
	Chadlington and Churchill	West Oxfordshire	1,533
	Charlbury and Finstock	West Oxfordshire	2,955
	Chipping Norton	West Oxfordshire	4,640
	Ducklington	West Oxfordshire	1,667
	Eynsham and Cassington	West Oxfordshire	4,706
	Freeland and Hanborough	West Oxfordshire	3,378
	Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield	West Oxfordshire	3,107
	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone	West Oxfordshire	3,115
	Milton-under-Wychwood	West Oxfordshire	1,645
	North Leigh	West Oxfordshire	1,506
	Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt	West Oxfordshire	3,280
	Stonesfield and Tackley	West Oxfordshire	3,111
	The Bartons	West Oxfordshire	1,556
	Witney Central	West Oxfordshire	3,654
	Witney East	West Oxfordshire	5,541
	Witney North	West Oxfordshire	3,114
	Witney South	West Oxfordshire	4,522
	Witney West	West Oxfordshire	2,994
	Woodstock and Bladon	West Oxfordshire	3,097