

2023 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW

Governance Committee - 1 November 2022

Report of: Chief Executive

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by:

- Council - 15 November 2022

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) will publish their revised proposals for Parliamentary Boundaries around 8 November 2022. This will be accompanied by a final consultation period of 4 weeks, ending around 5 December. This report sets out a proposal for ensuring the Council is able to submit a consultation response within the consultation timeline.

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Recommendations to Governance Committee:

That Council be recommended to:

(a) Note that revised proposals from the Boundary Commission for England for Parliamentary boundaries for the Sevenoaks District Council area are due to be published around 8 November; and

(b) In accordance with the proposal at paragraph 16 of this report, approves that the Council submits a final consultation response to the Boundary Commission for England based on views collated from Members and agreed with the Chairman of the Governance Committee.

Recommendations to Council:

(a) Note that revised proposals from the Boundary Commission for England for Parliamentary boundaries for the Sevenoaks District Council area have been published; and

(b) In accordance with the proposal at paragraph 16 of this report, approves that the Council submits a final consultation response to the Boundary Commission for England based on views collated from Members and agreed with the Chairman of the Governance Committee.

Reason for recommendations: To ensure that Members are aware of the final proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries for the wards they represent and that they are aware how their views may be reported back to the Boundary Commission for England.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 2 The BCE has the task of periodically reviewing all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of rules most recently updated by Parliament in 2020. The BCE are required to report their final recommendations to Parliament by 1 July 2023.
- 3 The BCE are required to develop proposals which retain 650 constituencies for the UK Parliament as a whole and the proposed constituencies must also comply with strict parameters, in particular as far as the number of electors in each constituency is concerned.
- 4 Following the guidance of Parliament the final proposals must result in 543 constituencies in England (from 533), and require that every constituency - apart from two protected constituencies covering the Isle of Wight - has an electorate that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.
- 5 As well as the primary rule that constituencies must have no fewer than 69,724 electors and no more than 77,062, the legislation also states that, when deciding on boundaries, the Commission may also take into account:
 - special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - local government boundaries as they existed (or were in prospect) on 1 December 2020;
 - boundaries of existing constituencies;
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies; and
 - the inconveniences attendant on such changes.

Initial proposals

- 6 The BCE published their initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England on 8 June 2021. A summary of the proposals for the wards within the Sevenoaks District were reported to Governance Committee in June 2021 and are listed as background papers to this report.

- 7 Whilst the majority of the District wards are unaffected by the proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies, the proposals would see Ash & New Ash Green and Hartley & Hodsoll Street become part of the Tonbridge constituency.
- 8 Darenth and Wilmington, Sutton-at-Hone & Hawley within the Dartford borough would become part of the Sevenoaks constituency.
- 9 Following an internal survey, shared with all Councillors, the Council drafted and submitted a consultation response to the BCE setting out its own views on the appropriateness of the proposals for the District and, as requested by the BCE, set out a counter proposal which met all of the conditions set out in paragraph 5 above.
- 10 The Council's consultation submission is listed as a background paper to this report and can be viewed at www.bcereviews.org.uk/node/80207/view.

Final Consultation

- 11 It is understood that the BCE will publish revised proposals for their Parliamentary Boundary Review around 8 November. This will be accompanied by a final consultation period, lasting 4 weeks, until 5 December.
- 12 Unfortunately, at the time of this meeting of Governance Committee no further information is available to share with Members.
- 13 Once published, a limited amount of time will then be available to review the revised proposals for the Sevenoaks District and establish whether a further (and final) consultation response will be required.
- 14 It is recognised that it is important that the revised proposals are shared with all Councillors, and that ample opportunity is given for comments to be given in relation to the revised proposals published by the BCE.
- 15 It is therefore proposed that on publication Officers will circulate a summary of the proposals for Governance Committee and all Council Members.
- 16 Subject to the detail of the revised proposals, the following actions are suggested for Members consideration:
 - i. If the revised proposals directly align to the Council's counter proposal submitted to the initial consultation, a statement of support for that proposal be drafted

Or

 - ii. If the initial proposals are unchanged, or do not align directly with the Council's counter proposal that Members are provided with the opportunity to submit further views to Officers for collation, to

inform a draft, final consultation response. Members' views would be collated through a short survey or a drop-in session hosted by Officers.

- 17 The recommendations to this report set out that any further response to the revised proposals would be agreed with the Chairman of Governance Committee, based on the views collated from Members. This is the same process that was adopted for the Council's response to the initial proposals from the BCE in June 2021.
- 18 Members may also wish to note that the final consultation period is a public consultation and written responses can also be given by individuals should they wish to do so by visiting www.bcereviews.org.uk
- 19 At the closure of the final consultation period the BCE will then make its final decisions about whether further modifications need to be made in light of those representations.
- 20 When the BCE has decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it drafts and submits a formal written report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before the deadline of 1 July 2023.
- 21 The submission of the formal final report concludes the BCE's involvement in the constituency review process. The procedure to subsequently implement new constituencies is the responsibility of the Government.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

- 22 None.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

There is a risk that if no further consultation response is given the potential for the BCE to review their revised proposals may be reduced.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Conclusions

The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) will publish their revised proposals for Parliamentary Boundaries around 8 November 2022. This will be accompanied by a final consultation period of 4 weeks, ending around 5 December. It is considered important that Members have full sight of the revised proposals, have the opportunity to record their comments should it be necessary and that a final consultation response can be drafted on behalf of the Council based on those views. Proposals ensuring this can take place within the timelines set out by the BCE are set out within this report.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

[Report to Governance Committee - 22 June 2021](#)

[Initial Proposals for the Sevenoaks District](#)

[Sevenoaks District Council Initial Consultation Response](#)

Dr. Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive