

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date: **13 October 2016**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services**

Subject: **BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY
CONSTITUENCIES**

SUMMARY

The Boundary Commission for England reviews all Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England every five years. The current review, which must report to Parliament in September 2018, is being carried out under rules laid down in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

A public consultation was launched on 13 September 2016 to encourage everyone to contribute to the design of the new constituencies. The 12 week period of consultation ends on 5 December 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That authority be delegated to the Executive Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, to submit a response on behalf of Fareham Borough Council to the Boundary Commission for England's consultation on the 2018 Constituency Review; and
2. That the Executive Leader and Chief Executive Officer be authorised to attend a Public Hearing (if necessary) to present the Council's response.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 16 February 2011. As well as introducing the referendum on a proposal to move to the alternative voting system, which took place in May 2011, it also contained proposals to revise the apportionment of parliamentary constituencies across the country. The Act requires there to be a fixed number of constituencies for the whole of the UK – the number of constituencies allocated to England for the 2018 Review is 501. Having stated that no single constituency may be split between different parts of the UK, the Act provides a mathematical formula to determine how many constituencies each of the four parts of the UK should be allocated, based on the electorate figure as at the review date¹.
2. Every constituency in the country must meet an electorate as at the review date no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507.
3. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) has published its initial proposals, and started a major round of consultation on this re-organisation. Copies of all consultation material, including maps of proposed new constituencies, are available at the Civic Offices and are also published online at the Boundary Commission's website: <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/node/6488>
4. The deadline for responses to the consultation is 5 December 2016 and can be made by individuals as well as by representatives of organisations. This matter has been considered by the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee on the 27 September 2016 who received a presentation on the process of Boundary Reviews and the initial proposals.
5. Fareham Borough Council should consider if it wishes to make a collective response. It is therefore recommended that authority be delegated to the Executive Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, to submit a response on behalf of Fareham Borough Council to the Boundary Commission for England's consultation on the 2018 Constituency Review. This may require attendance at a Public Hearing or may be submitted in writing.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

6. The 2018 review of parliamentary constituencies is being carried out under rules laid down in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011. The procedures rely on a combination of written representations and oral presentations at public hearings. The old style of public inquiries has been abolished and replaced by shorter public hearings. These hearings are not inquiries, public meetings or debates, but provide an opportunity both for the BCE to explain its initial proposals and for people to give their views on those proposals directly to an Assistant Commissioner who will chair the meetings.

¹ The Act provides that the electorate figures that are to be used for a review are those that were in the version of the electoral register published on the 'review date'. This is defined by the Act as the date two years and ten months before the review is required to report to the Government. For the 2018 Review, this means that the electorate figures used must be those from the electoral registers that were required to be published on or before 1 December 2015.

7. The closest Public Hearing to Fareham will be held in Portsmouth at the Guildhall on Thursday 27 October 2016 from 09:00 - 20:00 and on Friday 28 October from 09:00 – 17:00. Anyone wishing to speak at a public hearing must register to do so in advance, via the Boundary Commission's website.
8. The BCE has confirmed that it will place just as much significance on representations made in writing as to those made orally at public hearings and all representations will be considered fairly as long as they are received by the 5 December deadline as part of the initial 12-week consultation. At each 'lead' hearing (the first in the region), the five political parties with English seats in the UK Parliament will be offered a longer speaking slot at the start of the hearing to set out their proposals for the whole region. This allows the political parties to address the whole region and it should be made clear that the BCE places no more weight on the representations from the political parties than from anyone else.
9. Responses to the consultation should follow the guidelines provided by the BCE and in particular, it is requested that responses in support of the proposals are also submitted. The BCE has identified that often people who are happy with the proposals do not respond in support which has resulted in a distorted view of the balance of public support or objection. This can also lead to disappointment of those who do support the proposals should there be any revision to those.
10. Resources such as maps and electorate figures are available on the BCE website and should be used when considering objections.
11. When all the responses have been collated from all sources, the BCE will publish on its website all of the representations that it has received for each region (including transcripts of the public hearings). A hard copy will also be placed on deposit in at least one location within each proposed constituency. Following this, there will be a further 4 week secondary consultation when views can be sent in writing to the BCE specifically about those representations.
12. The BCE will then receive a report on each region, summarising and considering the representations and recommending whether – and, if so, how – the initial proposals for that region should be revised in the light of those representations. The BCE will then consider each report and determine whether, and to what extent, revisions should be made to its initial proposals.
13. The BCE will then publish a notice in each region stating whether or not revisions have been made to the initial proposals for that region. Alongside this notice, all written representations received during the four-week secondary consultation period will also be published on the BCE website. If the proposals are revised, then the Act provides for a further period of eight weeks for written representations to be made to the BCE on the revised proposals for that area. There are no public hearings at this stage; nor is there a repeat of the four-week period for commenting on the representations of others.
14. The BCE review will finish when the final report of the Commission's recommendations is provided to the Secretary of State. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 specifies that this must happen in September 2018.

CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

15. The Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 states that the BCE may have regard to 'local Government boundaries' in developing its proposals. The Act defines such boundaries in England as the boundaries of:

- Counties and their electoral divisions;
- Districts and their Wards;
- London Boroughs and their wards; and
- The City of London

All as they were in force on the last ordinary day of election of councillors before the review date (as at 7 May 2015).

16. The South East region has been allocated 83 constituencies, which is a reduction of one from the current arrangements.

17. The full proposals for our sub-region can be seen in the BCE's South East Initial Proposals document.

18. The proposed changes affecting Fareham's constituency is to include the City of Winchester Ward of Whiteley from the existing Meon Valley constituency.

19. This proposal would increase the electorate by 2,209.

COMMENTS FROM LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

20. The Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee received a presentation about the Boundary Commission for England's Parliamentary Boundary Review at its meeting on 27 September 2016.

21. In discussing the item, the Committee commented that it was largely in support of the Boundary Commission's proposals and agreed with the logic of taking the whole of Whiteley into the Fareham Constituency.

22. The Committee was pleased to note that the 2018 review does not split Fareham (as per previous proposals) but noted concern that the calculations do not take into account plans for future housing developments and therefore a rise in electorate numbers.

RISK ASSESSMENT

23. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

24. Members have the opportunity to feedback their responses to the consultation directly to the Boundary Commission for England but in order to meet the consultation deadline, the Council is also requested to delegate to the Executive Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer, the authority to submit a

response on behalf of Fareham Borough Council on the 2018 Parliamentary Constituency Review.

25. Members are invited to consider the various maps, proposal documents and the Boundary Commission's website in order to contribute to the Council's response to the consultation.

Background Papers:

None

Reference Papers:

- A. Boundary Commission for England - Guide to the 2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies: <http://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-07-11-Guide-to-2018-review-Final-Version.pdf>
- B. Boundary Commission for England – Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the South East Region: <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/node/6488>

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher (Ext 4553).