
Meeting of the Cabinet – 26th October, 2011

Report of the Chief Executive

Review of Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

Purpose

1. To consider the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England with regard to the boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies.

Background

2. Under the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 the Boundary Commission is obliged to review constituency boundaries. Under the legislation the number of constituencies within the United Kingdom reduces from 650 to 600. In England the number falls from 533 to 502.
3. The statutory rules state that every constituency in England (apart from the Isle of Wight) must have an electorate of between 72,810 and 80,473 i.e. 5% either side of the **electoral quota of 76,641**. In determining the boundaries the Commission may also take into account:-
 - (a) Special geographic considerations including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency.
 - (b) Local Government boundaries as they existed on 6th May 2010.
 - (c) Boundaries of existing constituencies, and
 - (d) Any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies.
4. However, none of the factors set out in paragraph 3 (a) – (d) above overrides the necessity to achieve an electorate in every constituency that is within the range allowed.
5. The initial proposals were issued on the 13th September 2011 and a copy has been placed in the Members' Room. The proposals have also been on formal public deposit in our main libraries.

6. The Commission is consulting upon the initial proposals for 12 weeks ending on 5th December 2011. For the West Midlands this will include 4 public hearings in :-
- Birmingham – 3rd and 4th November 2011
 - Ludlow – 7th and 8th November 2011
 - Warwick – 10th and 11th November 2011
 - Stafford – 14th and 15th November 2011
7. All of the representations made on the initial proposals will be published and around the Spring of 2012 there will be a further four week period when comments can be made in response to these representations.
8. If the Commission decides to revise any proposal, this will be published and subject to a further consultation period of eight weeks, probably towards the end of 2012. The Commission will then consider its final recommendations to the Government during 2013 with Parliament making the final decision.

The Initial Proposals for Dudley Metropolitan Borough

9. The following table shows the composition of the current Dudley constituencies including the two which are cross boundary.

Table 1

Dudley North Constituency

BOROUGH WARD	ELECTORATE
Castle and Priory	10692
Gornal	10580
Sedgley	9850
St James's	10019
St Thomas's	10163
Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	10410
Total	61714

Dudley South Constituency

BOROUGH WARD	ELECTORATE
Brierley Hill	10105
Brockmoor and Pensnett	9771
Kingswinford North and Wall Heath	10259
Kingswinford South	10423
Netherton, Woodside & St. Andrews	10636
Wordsley	10114
TOTAL	61308

Halesowen and Rowley Regis Constituency

BOROUGH	ELECTORATE
Belle Vale	10227
Halesowen North	9573
Halesowen South	10008
Hayley Green and Cradley South	9419
Blackheath*	9276
Cradley Health and Old Hill*	9989
Rowley*	9164
TOTAL	67656

* Wards situated in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Stourbridge Constituency

BOROUGH WARD	ELECTORATE
Amblecote	10465
Cradley and Wollescote	9953
Lye and Stourbridge North	9597
Norton	9743
Pedmore and Stourbridge East	10008
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	10311
Wollaston and Stourbridge Town	10148
TOTAL	70225

Wolverhampton South East Constituency

BOROUGH WARD	ELECTORATE
Coseley East**	9657
TOTAL	9657

** Relinquished to Wolverhampton City Council

10. The initial proposals of the Commission are set out in Table 2 below:-

Table 2

Dudley East and Oldbury Constituency

BOROUGH WARDS	ELECTORATE
Castle and Priory	10,692
Netherton, Woodside and St Andrews	10,636
St James's	10,019
St Thomas's	10,163
Greets Green and Lyng*	7,702
Oldbury*	9,218
Tipton Green*	9,738
Tividale*	9,226
TOTAL	77,394

* Wards situated in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Dudley South and Rowley Regis Constituency

BOROUGH WARDS	ELECTORATE
Amblecote	10,465
Brierley Hill	10,105
Lye and Stourbridge North	9,597
Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood	10,311
Wordsley	10,114
Blackheath*	9,276
Cradley Heath and Old Hill*	9,989
Rowley*	9,164
TOTAL	79,021

* Wards situated in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

Dudley West Constituency

BOROUGH WARDS	ELECTORATE
Brockmoor and Pensnett	9,771
Coseley East	9,657
Gornal	10,580
Kingswinford North and Wall Heath	10,259
Kingswinford South	10,423
Sedgley	9,850
Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	10,410
Spring Vale*	8,735
TOTAL	79,685

* Ward situated in Wolverhampton City Council

Halesowen and Stourbridge Constituency

BOROUGH WARDS	ELECTORATES
Belle Vale	10,227
Cradley and Wollescote	9,953
Halesowen North	9,573
Halesowen South	10,008
Hayley Green and Cradley South	9,419
Norton	9,743
Pedmore and Stourbridge East	10,008
Wollaston and Stourbridge Town	10,148
TOTAL	79,079

11. Halesowen and Stourbridge would be the only constituency entirely within the Borough. Seven of the eight wards of Dudley West are within the Borough with the remaining (Spring Vale) in Wolverhampton. Dudley South and Rowley Regis contains three Sandwell wards (currently in the Halesowen and Rowley Regis constituency) with five Dudley wards. The eight wards in Dudley East and Oldbury are evenly split between Dudley and Sandwell.
12. The initial proposals clearly achieve the primary objective of falling within 5% of the electoral quota of 76,641 referred to in paragraph 3 above, but, apart from Halesowen and Stourbridge, they pay scant regard to the factors referred to in paragraph 3 (a) – (d) above. On the plus side all of our constituency boundaries remain within the Black Country and, unlike other parts of the country, do not cross into neighbouring counties.
13. During the next few weeks we will be consulting with other Black Country local authorities to establish whether it might be possible to develop alternative proposals which result in more constituencies falling entirely within the boundary of each authority. This will be easier said than done because of the primary objective of achieving the electoral quota and removing a ward or wards from one constituency would create a gap in another constituency.
14. This initial phase of the process has a tight timetable because the first public hearing in Birmingham is on the 3rd and 4th November 2011. In view of this I am proposing that Cabinet authorise me, in consultation with the Leader and Councillor Sparks, to examine any viable counter-proposal and, in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources, make an appropriate submission to the public hearing in Birmingham.

Finance

15. Any cost incurred during this process will be met from existing budgets.

Legal

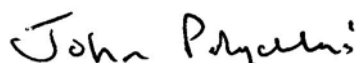
16. The review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries is governed by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

Equality Impact

17. It is not considered that the review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries will have any particular impact on equality issues but any alternative proposals put forward by the Council will be consistent with our policies on equality and diversity.

Recommendation

18. It is recommended that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Councillor Sparks, be authorised to examine any viable alternative proposal for Parliamentary constituency boundaries within the borough and, in consultation with the Director of Corporate Resources, make an appropriate submission to the public hearing to be held by the Boundary Commission for England.



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List of Background papers:

Initial Proposals issued by Boundary Commission for England.