

Committee	Date	Classification	Report No.	Agenda Item No.
General Purposes Committee	13 October 2011	Unrestricted		
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)		Title: Boundary Commission for England – Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review 2013		
Originating Officer(s): Isabella Freeman		Ward(s) affected: All		

REASONS FOR LATENESS AND URGENCY: This report was not circulated with the Committee agenda as information required to complete the report was not available at that time. The report is nevertheless recommended for consideration at this meeting as the consultation period on the Boundary Commission for England's proposals ends on 5th December 2011, before the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee.

SUMMARY

1. The four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions announced the commencement of the Sixth Periodical Review on 4 March 2011. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) published initial recommendations on 13 September 2011. These initial recommendations are subject to consultation until 5th December 2011.
2. Under the method of allocating the number of seats for each constituent country of the UK the BCE announced that England would have 502 constituencies, a reduction of 31 from the current number. Within London, the BCE's proposals would leave four of the 73 current constituencies unchanged including the two constituencies in Tower Hamlets, which would be one of only two London boroughs where Parliamentary Constituencies remain coterminous with the borough boundaries. Appendix 'A' attached summarises the proposals in relation to London.
3. The Mayor's proposed response to the BCE's consultation is attached at Appendix 'B'. This is recommended for adoption as the Council's submission subject to consultation with the respective political group leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. That the UK Parliamentary Boundary proposals for Tower Hamlets be noted.
5. That the proposed submission from the Mayor, as set out at Appendix 'B', be circulated to the political group leaders on the Council and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services) be authorised to agree the Council's response to the Boundary Commission for England in the light of any comments received.

BACKGROUND

6. The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 requires the total number of constituencies in the UK to be reduced from 650 to 600 and requires greater parity between the number of voters in each constituency. The Act states that each constituency must be within 5% of the UK Electoral Quota of 76,641 voters.
7. The four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions announced the commencement of the Sixth Periodical Review on 4 March 2011. The Boundary Commissions agreed, for the purposes of the Sixth Review, that the total UK electorate was 45,678,175 which gave an electoral quota for the whole of the UK of 76,641. This means that every constituency in Great Britain must have an electorate no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473.
8. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) published its initial recommendations on 13 September 2011. The recommendations for England are based on the electoral regions for the European Parliament. Under the method of allocating the number of seats for each constituent country of the UK, England would have 502 constituencies, a reduction of 31 from the current number.
9. The BCE also stated that it would refer to local government boundaries as they existed at 6 May 2010 and would not generally take into account local government boundaries that took effect at the local elections in May 2011.
10. The boundaries of most constituencies in England will be altered in some way by the proposals although 77 constituencies are unchanged by the recommendations; some seats have been abolished and the area they covered has been split up into several new constituencies.
11. The proposed constituencies are all wholly contained within larger regional boundaries. Wards are the smallest unit used when creating constituencies and the Commission has been able to avoid splitting them when drawing up the new boundaries.
12. To remain consistent with this methodology and achieve constituencies within 5% of the electoral quota, some proposed constituencies cross local authority boundaries or geographical features such as rivers.
13. The BCE has stated that there are likely to be “very extensive and wide-ranging changes to be made to the existing pattern and composition of constituencies”.

Initial proposals for London

14. Four of the 73 current constituencies are unchanged; two in the London Borough of Barnet and two in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. London

region has been allocated 68 constituencies, a reduction of 5 seats (see Appendix A).

15. 38 of the new constituencies cross London borough boundaries, 37 of these contain parts of 2 London boroughs and one (the new City of London and Islington South constituency) contains parts of two London boroughs and the whole of the City of London.
16. There are only two London boroughs where Parliamentary Constituencies remain coterminous, London borough of Tower Hamlets and London borough of Bromley.

COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

17. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

18. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report

IMPLICATIONS FOR ONE TOWER HAMLETS

19. There are no immediate implications for One Tower Hamlets arising from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)

LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Brief description of "background paper"

Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection

None

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APPENDIX 'A'

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONDON

Local Authority	Previous Constituencies	Total New Constituencies	Whole (contained within borough)	Part (adjoining other boroughs)	Lead (borough has responsibility)	Local Authorities (no. of LA's to cross-work with)
Barking & Dagenham	2	2	0	2	2	2
Barnet	3	3	2	1	3	1
Bexley	3	3	2	1	2	1
Brent	3 (1 part)	5	0	5	2	4
Bromley	3	3	3	0	3	0
Camden	2	4	0	4	2	4
City	1	1	0	1	0	1
Croydon	3	4	2	2	4	1
Ealing	3	5	1	4	2	4
Enfield	3	5	2	3	2	2
Greenwich	2	3	1	2	2	2
Hackney	2	2	1	1	2	1
H'mith & Fulham	2 (1 part)	3	0	3	2	3
Haringey	2	3	0	3	2	2
Harrow	2	3	0	3	2	1
Havering	3	3	2	1	2	1
Hillingdon	3	4	1	3	3	3
Hounslow	2	4	1	3	2	3
Islington	2	2	1	1	2	2
Kensington & Chelsea	2	3	0	3	0	2
Kingston	2	2	1	1	1	1
Lambeth	3	6	1	5	2	2
Lewisham	3	3	1	2	3	2
Merton	2	4	0	4	2	4
Newham	2	3	1	2	3	2
Redbridge	4 (2 part)	4	2	2	2	2
Richmond	2	2	1	1	2	1
Southwark	3	3	1	2	2	2
Sutton	2	3	0	3	1	2
Tower Hamlets	2	2	2	0	2	0
Waltham Forest	3	3	1	2	2	2
Wandsworth	3	4	0	4	4	2
Westminster	2 (1 part)	3	0	3	2	2

APPENDIX B

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

MAYOR'S PROPOSED SUBMISSION

Dear Commissioners,

I write on behalf of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets with regard to your 2013 Review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries.

I would first like to place on record my thoughts on the wider review taking place in London and across the country.

I have to admit that I am not convinced by the initial premise behind this review, namely that it was desirable to reduce by 50 the number of representatives in Parliament. In an age in which we frequently bemoan how parliamentarians are too distant from their constituents, I cannot see how having fewer representatives to constituents can be helpful.

This exercise appears to be justified on the grounds of cost savings, which in my view sets a dangerous precedent. Matters as important as the democratic process – effectively altering our uncodified constitution – should be motivated solely by the desire improve upon the process.

Furthermore, I believe that the reduction by five in London constituencies will have a negative effect on representation. Given that London is home to the most diverse community in England, particularly with its large BME population, it appears likely that having fewer representatives for London will result in a Parliament that is less representative of modern Britain.

The proposed boundaries have been drawn up based on numbers of electors, not numbers of constituents – and so the much-cited principle of making representation more fair and equal neglects the fact that many constituents have not registered to vote. Given that statistically, non-registration is overrepresented in areas of poverty and deprivation, those most in need of political support will be underrepresented in Parliament.

These worries go hand in hand with the work my borough is doing around the Government's PREVENT initiative – aimed at tackling violent extremism in Britain. A major part of this is by encouraging engagement with the democratic process. It goes without saying that the groups this work focuses on are primarily BME communities and those in abject poverty. Anything that could be interpreted as moving these groups further away from the reach of democracy would be a major step backwards in this regard, and thoroughly detrimental to all that has been achieved in this sphere.

I now move onto your proposals for this locality. I strongly welcome your proposal to retain the two current parliamentary constituencies that cover our borough. You will be aware that our boundaries changed in the last realignment and I feel strongly that further alterations would jeopardise the relationship between our residents and their parliamentary representatives.

Tower Hamlets has a unique identity as a borough. Its boundaries encompass some of the largest groups of ethnic minority residents in London, as well as the economic powerhouse of Canary Wharf, the second most important financial centre in Europe. In addition, the borough has a rich cultural history as somewhere that has welcomed generations of immigrants, beginning with the French Huguenots in the seventeenth-century, followed by the Irish, the Jewish and most recently the Bangladeshi communities.

You may be aware that the borough has submitted a bid for city-status, as part of the competition recently announced, in which the Cabinet office will advise Her Majesty on which local authority is most deserving of this status which she will confer as part of the celebrations of her Diamond Jubilee next year.

Our bid is centred heavily on the borough's distinct identity. Any move that would break up the borough as such, grouping wards with those of neighbouring boroughs would seriously throw into doubt our definitive borders and undermine the integrity of Tower Hamlets Hamlets as a place, as a community. This in turn would run a significant risk of jeopardising our bid for city status. This would be a terrible blow.

When asked where they live, our residents, from Shoreditch to Milwall, and from Spitalfields to Bow will commonly reply 'Tower Hamlets'. Our communities identify strongly with their political representation. Any moves to disrupt these well-forged links would be notably detrimental to representation. It would take decades for local residents, many of whom are from very deprived backgrounds in which such an impressive level of political engagement is very rare, to accustom themselves once again to new structures of representation - and they do not identify with neighbouring Hackney or Newham, for example.

I do hope you will take this all into account when finalising your work.

Yours sincerely,

Lutfur Rahman
Mayor of Tower Hamlets