

Committee <b>General Purposes Committee</b>	Date <b>19 December 2012</b>	Classification <b>Unrestricted</b>	Report No.	Agenda Item No. <b>4.2</b>
Report of: <b>Assistant Chief Executive (Legal Services)</b>		Title: <b>Parliamentary Constituency Boundary Review 2013 – Update</b>		
Originating Officer(s): <b>John Williams, Service Head, Democratic Services</b>		Ward(s) affected: <b>All</b>		

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Committee is aware that the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is currently undertaking a review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries to take effect in 2013, in accordance with the requirements of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.
- 1.2 The General Purposes Committee in November 2011 received a report on the BCE's initial recommendations under which the two constituencies in Tower Hamlets would remain unchanged. The Committee welcomed the proposal for no change and agreed the Council's response to the BCE accordingly.
- 1.3 The BCE subsequently reviewed its proposals in the light of the responses received and has published and consulted on revised recommendations. This report informs the Committee of those revised recommendations which now propose substantial changes to the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies locally.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee note the report.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 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. This means that every constituency in Great Britain (except those covering the Isle of Wight) must have an electorate no smaller than 72,810 and no larger than 80,473.
- 3.2 The four Parliamentary Boundary Commissions announced the commencement of the Sixth Periodical Review on 4 March 2011. The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) stated that there were likely to be

“very extensive and wide-ranging changes to be made to the existing pattern and composition of constituencies”.

- 3.3 The 2013 Parliamentary Review is an entirely separate exercise from the Local Electoral Review that is currently underway in Tower Hamlets and which will recommend changes to the number of councillors and ward boundaries for local elections from 2014.
- 3.4 The BCE published its initial recommendations on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Those initial recommendations were subject to consultation until 5<sup>th</sup> December 2011. Under the initial recommendations England would have 502 constituencies, a reduction of 31 from the current number. Within London, there would be a reduction of five seats and the BCE’s initial recommendations would have left just four of the 73 current London constituencies unchanged, including the two constituencies in Tower Hamlets, which was one of only two London boroughs (the other being L B Bromley) where, under the initial recommendations, parliamentary constituencies would remain coterminous with the borough boundaries.
- 3.5 The General Purposes Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> November agreed the Council’s response to the BCE consultation on its initial recommendations. The response noted that the criteria under which the Boundary Commission is required to undertake the review do not require any changes to the existing parliamentary constituency boundaries in Tower Hamlets. Both Bethnal Green and Bow (79,581\*) and Poplar and Limehouse (74,919\*) constituencies have electorates within the range stipulated in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (\*2011 figures, as required by the Act). The Council welcomed the 'no change' proposal and considered that it supported consistency, cohesion and stability.
- 3.6 The Mayor also responded and welcomed the 'no change' proposal. In his response the Mayor referred also to Tower Hamlets' unique identity as a borough and felt that any change that created cross-borough constituencies would be detrimental to that identity and to representation.

#### **4. THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION’S REVISED PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Notwithstanding the above, the Commission has now revised its initial recommendations quite substantially in revised proposals which were published on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and the subject of public consultation until 10<sup>th</sup> December.
- 4.2 The BCE states that it had received almost 50,000 responses to the consultation on the initial recommendations and the revised proposals were drawn up in the light of those submissions.
- 4.3 In relation to London, the revised proposals are significantly different from the initial recommendations. The overall number of constituencies in London will still reduce from 73 to 68, but the revised proposals include changes to 50 of the 68 constituencies that the Commission proposed in September 2011. Only three constituencies will remain the same as they are under existing arrangements. Most significantly affecting Tower Hamlets, the

Commission has revised its initial proposal for a constituency that crosses the River Lee between Chingford and Edmonton, proposing instead a constituency that crosses the Lee between Bow and Stratford.

4.4 Rather than 'no change', therefore, the resulting proposals now envisage Tower Hamlets being divided between three parliamentary constituencies, only one of which will be completely within the borough. The three proposed constituencies are:

- **Poplar and Stepney** (comprising the existing wards of St Katharine's & Wapping, Whitechapel, Shadwell, St Dunstan's & Stepney Green, Limehouse, East India & Lansbury, Millwall and Blackwall & Cubitt Town);
- **Bethnal Green and Shoreditch** (comprising the existing wards of Spitalfields & Banglatown, Weavers, Bethnal Green North, Bethnal Green South and Mile End & Globe Town; plus parts of L. B. Hackney); and
- **Bow and Stratford** (comprising the existing wards of Mile End East, Bromley-by-Bow, Bow West and Bow East; plus parts of L. B. Newham)

4.5 Full details of the revised proposals including the BCE's full and summary report, maps, electoral data and background information on the boundary review can be found on the Boundary Commission website at <http://consultation.boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/whats-proposed/london/>

4.6 Attached at Appendix A to this report are the Constituency Breakdown Tables prepared by the BCE showing the relationship between existing London parliamentary constituencies and those in the revised proposals, in terms of the number of electors and percentage of the electorate included in each.

## 5. THE NEXT STEPS

5.1 Consultation on the revised proposals closed on 10<sup>th</sup> December and the Boundary Commission for England will now consider all evidence received throughout the review, before making its final recommendations to the Government. The Commission must make those final recommendations by 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

5.2 Once the Government has received the BCE's final report, it must be laid before parliament prior to implementation of the changes.

## 6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

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

## 7. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)

7.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The boundary review is being conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011.

## **8. IMPLICATIONS FOR ONE TOWER HAMLETS**

- 8.1 There are no immediate implications for One Tower Hamlets arising from this report. One of the aims of the boundary review is to achieve greater parity in the number of electors in each parliamentary constituency.

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### **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**

Revised proposals of the Boundary Commission for England

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