

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>18 NOVEMBER 2011</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES</b>
<b>REPORT BY</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

To explain to Council the Boundary Commission for England's proposals for new Parliamentary constituencies in Herefordshire and to agree the authorities response on the Boundary Commission's proposals as they affect the Herefordshire Parliamentary constituencies.

### **Key Decision**

This is not a Key Decision.

### **Recommendation**

**THAT:**

**The proposed constituencies as set out in Appendix 2 of this report be approved and forwarded to the Boundary Commission for England as the Council's formal response to the consultation**

### **Key Points Summary**

- The first stage of the review process for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England has been completed and the initial proposals have been published.
- Consultation on the initial proposals will close on 5 December 2011.
- The West Midlands region has been allocated 54 constituencies, which is a reduction of five from the current arrangements.
- The Commission's proposals include a constituency that would contain electorate from Herefordshire only, a constituency with electorate from both Herefordshire and Shropshire to include the towns of Leominster and Ludlow, and another constituency, which would include

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
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electorate from both Herefordshire and Worcestershire to include the towns of Ledbury and Great Malvern.

- Group Leaders met on 4 November 2011 to consider the Councils response and their recommendation is set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

## Alternative Options

- 1 That no response be made to the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituencies.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 It better represents the existing constituencies for Herefordshire and does not dislocate its Parliamentary representatives from its recognised communities.

## Introduction and Background

- 3 The Boundary Commission for England are undertaking a periodic review of all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament. These rules involve a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502 and require that every constituency apart from two specific exceptions (relating to the Isle of White) must have an electorate that is no smaller than 72,810 and no larger the 80,473.

- 4 The electorate in the current Hereford Constituencies is as follows:

- Hereford and South Herefordshire - 71,611
- North Herefordshire - 66,536

## Key Considerations

### Initial proposals

- 5 The Boundary Commission for England has now completed the first stage of the review process and has published its initial proposals for the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 6 The West Midlands region has been allocated 54 constituencies which is a reduction of five from the current arrangements. The current proposals leave 10 of the existing 59 constituencies unchanged.
- 7 As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, the Boundary Commission has grouped some Local Authority areas into sub-regions. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region is determined by the electorate of the combined Local Authorities.

Sub-Region	Existing Allocation	Proposed Allocation
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Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire	13	12
Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent	12	11
Warwickshire and West Midlands	34	31

- 8 The Commission's proposals include a Hereford constituency (76,780 electorate), a constituency which contains electorate from both Herefordshire and Shropshire which includes the towns of Leominster and Ludlow (77,911 electorate) and another constituency which includes electors from both Herefordshire and Worcestershire combining the towns of Ledbury and Great Malvern (79,100 electorate),
- 9 Details of the Herefordshire wards in the new constituencies proposed by the Boundary Commission for England including the electorate are attached as Appendix 1. to this report.
- 10 In deciding boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies the Commissioner takes into account:
- (a) Special geographical considerations, including the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
  - (b) Local Government boundaries as they existed on 6 May 2010;
  - (c) Boundaries of existing constituencies; and
  - (d) Any local ties that would be broken by the changes in constituencies
- 11 None of the above factors will override the necessity to achieve an electorate in each constituency that is within the range allowed.
- 12 The Boundary Commission for England is currently consulting on the proposals until 5 December 2011. It will then publish the representations made on the proposals, following which there will be a further four week period when additional written representations on the submissions can be made.
- 13 If the Commission decide to change its proposals as a result of the representations received, it will publish revised proposals and consult on them for a further period of eight weeks.
- 14 When the Commission has decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it will submit its proposals to the Government.
- 15 With regard to the naming of any new Constituency the Commission's policy is that when Constituencies remain largely unchanged, the existing constituency name would usually remain unchanged. Generally, the name would reflect the main population centres contained

in the constituency, though if a suitable alternative name is proposed which generally commands greater support locally, then the Commission will usually be prepared to recommend the alternative.

- 16 On receipt of the Commissioners final report the Government will then lay a draft order in Council which will be debated in Parliament. It is proposed that the new constituencies take effect at the Next General Election (2015). Any by-elections held in the meantime will be held on the basis of the existing constituencies.

## **The Council's Response**

- 17 The proposals presented by the Boundary Commission for England do not take into account the local and unique identify of Herefordshire and dislocate its Parliamentary representatives from its recognised communities. Long established ties would be broken by these proposals, especially with regard to the removal of the Golden Valley North and Golden Valley South Wards from the Hereford and South Herefordshire Constituency
- 18 The proposals put forward in Appendix 2 of this report would maintain the unique identify of the Herefordshire constituencies, whilst also meeting the Boundary Commission's criteria, in that the recommended constituencies would have electorate of more than 72,810 and less than 80,473. This proposal would create a Herefordshire North Constituency and Herefordshire South Constituency. The Herefordshire North Constituency would take in 5 wards from Malvern Town
- 19 The remainder of the wards within Boundary Commission's proposals for Malvern and Ledbury and Ludlow and Leominster constituencies could be merged to create a new constituency of Ludlow and Malvern with an electorate of 77,259

## **Community Impact**

- 20 Local ties could be broken by the proposed changes in the constituencies and there could well be accessibility issues for constituents and the Member of Parliament.

## **Financial Implications**

- 21 There would be costs to the Council in preparing electoral data for the new Constituencies. These have not as yet been assessed.

## **Legal Implications**

- 22 None

## **Risk Management**

- 23 There are minor risks around the preparation of electoral data in the lead up to the next Parliamentary elections to ensure that no elector is disenfranchised.

## **Consultees**

- 24 All Members of the Council have been advised of the Boundary Commission for England's proposals and there has been a national publicity exercise.

## **Appendices**

25 Appendix 1- Electoral Commission's proposed constituencies including wards and electorates for the Herefordshire constituencies

Appendix 2- Proposed Constituencies for Herefordshire North, Herefordshire South and Ludlow and Malvern.

## **Background Papers**

- None identified.