



Committee report

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	16 NOVEMBER 2016
Title	REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES BY THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND
Report of	THE RETURNING OFFICER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. To consider the proposals from the Boundary Commission for the Parliamentary Boundaries on the Isle of Wight.

BACKGROUND

2. In accordance with the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 the Boundary Commission for England (the Boundary Commission) is currently conducting a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries on the basis of rules set by Parliament in 2011.
3. These rules require the Boundary Commission to reduce the number of constituencies in the UK and make more equal the number of electors in each constituency. The Boundary Commission must make recommendations for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in September 2018. This will result in a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England (from 533 to 501), and require that every constituency – apart from two specified exceptions – must have an electorate that is no smaller than 71,031 and no larger than 78,507.
4. One of the two specified exceptions mentioned in para 3 above is the Isle of Wight where the rules state that the Island must have two constituencies, although neither of these constituencies is required to have an electorate that is within the requirements on electoral size set out in the rules (between 71,031 and 78,507).
5. Although the Island has to have two whole constituencies, the legislation does not state that the two constituencies should have similar electorates. However the Boundary Commission consider that it would be in accordance with the spirit of the legislation to divide the Island relatively equally in terms of electorate.

6. Having considered a number of configurations, the Boundary Commission proposal is to divide the Island into Isle of Wight East and Isle of Wight West constituencies. Both are similar in terms of geographical size and both contain elements of rural and coastal communities. The electorate size of Isle of Wight East is estimated at 53,268 and that for Isle of Wight West at 52,180.
7. A plan showing the proposed areas is attached at appendix 1 - the boundary between the two parliamentary constituencies follows our own electoral division (ward) boundaries and hence no electoral division straddles both proposed constituencies.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

8. This matter is being undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England and has no direct impact on the services of the Isle of Wight Council. However strategically the Island will benefit by changing from being the largest parliamentary constituency being represented by one MP, to having two smaller constituencies being represented by an MP each.

CONSULTATION

9. The Boundary Commission is undertaking this process and is now formally consulting on its proposals. The Council is being asked to consider if it wishes to respond to this consultation. There is no need for the Council to consult on its views.
10. The current consultation period is open until the 5 December 2016. Any interested member of the public or other bodies are encouraged to submit any views they may have direct to the Boundary Commission.
11. The Boundary Commission will take into account any views submitted and they will submit their final report to the Government in September 2018, with the intention that any changes come into effect from May 2020 (the date of the next planned general election).

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no financial implications on the proposals for the council. The costs of supporting 2 MPs are borne by the government, as are the costs of holding two elections at the same time.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. There are no direct legal implications for the Council. The legal basis of this exercise, and in particular the need for the Island to have two constituencies, is set out in paras 2 to 4 above. The Council does not have to respond to the consultation if it does not wish to do so.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

14. The council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination,

promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This proposal has no impact on any of these groups.

OPTIONS

15. The options are:
- (a) To simply note the proposal and make no further comment;
 - (b) In that the proposals meet the legal requirements placed on the Boundary Commission and they broadly create two equal constituencies to formally support the proposals;
 - (c) To not support the proposals and to identify an alternative.

RISK MANAGEMENT

16. The only real risk to the Council on the proposals would be the potential for an element of confusion if the final boundary between East and West divided an electoral division. The current proposal does not do this.

EVALUATION

17. Given that the legislation requires the Island to have two parliamentary constituencies, and that the Boundary Commission are proposing to do this by having two areas that are broadly equal in terms of geography, communities, electorate size and that they do not divide electoral divisions it is suggested that the proposal should be supported.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

18. [Appendix 1](#) – plan showing the proposed two constituencies

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