

Council

Parliamentary Boundary Review

1 November 2011

Report of Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the proposals of the Parliamentary Boundary Reviews and agree the council's submission to the Boundary Commission for England on the Parliamentary Boundary Review.

This report is public

Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

- (1) Consider and endorse the response on the Parliamentary Boundary Review which proposes the transfer of the Ambrosden & Chesterton and Launton wards of Cherwell District to the Henley constituency.
- (2) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the member working group, to finalise the Council's submission to the Boundary Commission for England.
- (3) Agree that the member working group continues to meet as required to consider issues emerging from the on-going County and Parliamentary boundary reviews.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Parliamentary Boundary Review

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.
- 1.2 The BCE has the task of periodically reviewing all the parliamentary constituencies in England. In February 2011 it commenced a review on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament which involves a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England and requires constituencies to comply with new parameters so far as the number of electors in each constituency is concerned. The BCE will make final

recommendations to Government by October 2013.

1.3 The BCE timetable for the 2013 review is:

13 September 2011	Initial proposals published
13 September – 5 December 2011	Consultation open; includes regional public hearings
Spring 2012 (4 week period)	Publication of representations received on initial proposals
Late 2012 (8 week period)	Publication of revised proposals and public consultation; no public hearings
By 1 October 2013	Final recommendations to Government

1.4 The parliamentary boundary review proposals for the South East were received by Cherwell District Council on 13 September 2011. Copies of the documents which relate to Oxfordshire and Cherwell are on deposit in the Members Room. Information for the rest of the South East region is available from the Democratic and Elections office.

1.5 In summary the proposals as they relate to Oxfordshire and to Cherwell are that:

- Oxfordshire retains 6 constituencies.
- There will be no change to the Wantage (electorate; 79,775) and Witney (electorate; 78,220) constituencies as they are within 5% of the electoral quota.
- The Banbury and Oxford East constituencies are above the 5% limit and must be reduced.
- The Henley and Oxford West & Abingdon constituencies are also within the 5% of the electoral quota but it is proposed that they should take up the surplus from Banbury and Oxford East.
- To reduce the electorate of the Banbury constituency it is proposed that the Ambrosden & Chesterton and Launton wards of Cherwell District Council are transferred to the Henley constituency. This will be in addition to the existing Kirtlington and Otmoor wards of the Cherwell District.
- The new Henley constituency (electorate; 80,320) will also take in the Radley ward of the District of the Vale of the White Horse.
- The current Oxford West and Abingdon constituency will be renamed Abingdon and Oxford North (electorate; 79,704) and will continue to include the Kidlington North, Kidlington South and Yarnton, Gosford and

Water Eaton wards of the Cherwell District.

- The current Oxford East constituency will be renamed Oxford (electorate; 77,769) and will transfer the Carfax Ward to the Abingdon and Oxford North constituency.
- 1.6 Maps illustrating the impact of these proposals for Cherwell are attached at Appendix 1 a – c.
- 1.7 Members of the working group have considered the proposals and wish to make the following observations at this time:
- Conservative members – no objections to BCE proposals
 - Labour members – no objections to BCE proposals
 - Liberal Democrat members – no objections to BCE proposals
- 1.8 The boundary proposals for the Oxfordshire local authorities may be discussed at public hearings in Milton Keynes on 24 and 25 October 2011. However, it is not possible to establish in advance of the meetings who has registered to speak or what areas may be discussed. Officers have spoken to the other Oxfordshire local authorities and established that none of them are sending representatives to the public hearings. The transcripts of the hearings will be made public and the representations made will be published in the spring of 2012 so this Council will have a further opportunity to consider and respond to any subsequent changes to the boundary proposals. Therefore it was agreed by the working group that there was no need for the Council to be formally represented by officers at the public hearings.
- 1.9 The closing date for the submission of comments to BCE is 5 December 2011 which means that it is not possible to bring a report to a later Council meeting.
- 1.10 In summary the working group recommends that the Council should inform the BCE that there are no objections to the Parliamentary Boundary Review proposals for the transfer of the Ambrosden & Chesterton and Launton wards of Cherwell District to the Henley constituency.
- 1.11 The working group also recommends that it should continue to meet as required to consider issues emerging from the on-going County and Parliamentary boundary reviews and update Council accordingly.

Background

Parliamentary Boundary Review

- 1.12 The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 16 February 2011. The Act requires the four UK Boundary Commissions to conduct a review of parliamentary constituencies in their respective parts of the UK and submit final reports on the reviews to Government before 1 October 2013.

- 1.13 The Boundary Commission for England (BCE) began its current review of parliamentary boundaries on 22 February 2011. Full details of the review can be found at <http://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk>.
- 1.14 The BCE develops and publishes initial proposals for constituencies across England. Representations from the public about these proposals are then taken both in writing and at public hearings in each region of England. In light of all the views expressed about the initial proposals, the BCE may revise them and then conduct a further round of written consultation on the revised proposals.
- 1.15 The BCE is required to make a formal report to the Government by 1 October 2013, recommending any changes that it believes are appropriate to the distribution, size, shape, name or designation of constituencies in England. The review is therefore referred to as 'the 2013 Review'.
- 1.16 The Government will turn the recommendations of the BCE into draft legislation, which is then presented to Parliament. If Parliament approves the legislation, the recommended changes will be implemented for the next General Election after the date on which the legislation is passed.

Boundary and Polling District and Polling Place Review Working Group

- 1.17 Under Cherwell District Council's Constitution the power to deal with the issues outlined above rests with full Council. In order to meet the consultation response dates for the Parliamentary Boundary review, Council will need to agree responses at its meeting of 1 November 2011.
- 1.18 On 26 July 2011 Council agreed to establish an informal Member Working Group comprising two representatives of each political party to help shape and steer the process of responding to the boundary reviews and prepare the recommended consultation responses which Council will consider on 1 November 2011.

Conclusion

- 1.19 This report represents the comments and observations of the cross party working group established to consider the council's response to the various boundary reviews. It is recommended that council consider the working group's comments and observations in formulation of a submission to the Boundary Commission for England on the Parliamentary Boundary Review.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- Option One** To agree the recommendations as set out
 - Option Two** Not to agree the recommendations
 - Option Three** To amend the recommendations
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Consultations

None

Implications

Financial: Costs associated with this review (consultation and postage) have been met from the existing elections and electoral registration budget.

Comments checked by Karen Muir, Corporate System Accountant 01295 221559

Legal: No legal implications arising directly from this report regarding the Boundary reviews.

Polling Place Review - All authorities across England are legally required to carry out reviews every four years. Cherwell District Council completed its last review in 2007 and so it must have completed the process by the publication of the 2012 register on 1 December 2012.

Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager 01295 221587

Risk Management: No risk implications arising directly from this report regarding the Boundary reviews.

The polling place review ensures that the Council is meeting requirements to keep polling districts under regular review.

Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager 01295 221587

Wards Affected

All

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1 a	Map of proposed Banbury Constituency
Appendix 1 b	Map of proposed Henley Constituency
Appendix 1 c	Map of proposed Abingdon and Oxford North Constituency
Background Papers	
OCC and BCE boundary review maps and reports which are on deposit in the Members Room.	
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