

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

meeting date: 22ND JUNE 2021
title: BOUNDARY COMMISSION – PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW 2023
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: MICHELLE HAWORTH – PRINCIPAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present committee with information about the Boundary Commission's 2023 review of Parliamentary constituencies within England.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
- Community Objectives – How residents are represented by an MP in Parliament
 - Corporate Priorities – is an important part of the democratic process in the
 - Other Considerations – United Kingdom.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The BCE has the task of periodically reviewing all the Parliamentary constituencies in England. It is currently conducting a review on the basis of rules most recently updated by Parliament in 2020. These latest rules retain 650 constituencies for the UK Parliament as a whole, and require constituencies that are proposed or recommended to comply with strict parameters, in particular as far as the number of electors in each constituency is concerned.
- 2.3 The review process is informed by public consultation. The BCE develops and publishes initial proposals for constituencies across England. Representations from the public about these proposals are then taken in writing and at public hearings in each region of England across two rounds of consultation. In light of all the views expressed about these initial proposals, the BCE may revise them and then conduct a further round of written consultation on the revised proposals.
- 2.4 The BCE is required to make a formal final report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before 1 July 2023, recommending any changes that it believes are appropriate to the distribution, size, shape, name or designation of constituencies in England. The current constituencies review is therefore referred to as 'the 2023 Review'.
- 2.5 The Government must turn the recommendations of the BCE (and those of the equivalent Commissions for the other three parts of the UK) into an 'Order in Council' that implements the recommendations. The constituencies set out in the Order will then be implemented for the next General Election after the date on which the legislation is approved.
- 2.6 The electorate figures that are to be used for this review are the Parliamentary electors as they were in the electoral register on 2 March 2020. The BCE has published all the base electorate data for the 2023 Review on its website.

The distribution of constituencies

- 2.7 There is to be a fixed number of 650 constituencies for the whole of the UK. The number of constituencies allocated to England for the 2023 Review is 543.
- 2.8 This results in the following allocation of constituencies between the regions:

	Existing constituencies	Proposed constituencies
Eastern	58	61
East Midlands	46	47
London	73	75
North East	29	27
North West	75	73
South East	84	91*
South West	55	58
West Midlands	59	57
Yorkshire and the Humber	54	54

*Includes the two constituencies for the Isle of Wight

Statutory electorate range

- 2.9 Every constituency recommended must have an electorate (as at 2 March 2020) that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the 'UK electoral quota'. The UK electoral quota for the 2023 Review is, to the nearest whole number, 73,393.
- 2.10 Accordingly, every recommended constituency (except the five 'protected' constituencies) must have an electorate as at 2 March 2020 that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.

Other statutory factors

- 2.11 BCE may take the following factors into account in establishing a new map of constituencies for the 2023 Review:
- special geographical considerations, including in particular the size, shape and accessibility of a constituency;
 - local government boundaries as they existed (or were in prospect) on 1 December 2020;
 - boundaries of existing constituencies;
 - any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituencies; and
 - the inconveniences attendant on such changes.
- 2.12 The BCE uses wards (in district and borough council areas) or electoral divisions (in areas of unitary authorities that have a county status) as the basic building block for designing constituencies. Wards are well-defined and well-understood units, which are generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest. Any division of a ward between constituencies would therefore risk breaking local ties, as well as adding complexity to the task of Returning Officers in administering a Parliamentary election.
- 2.13 The BCE intends to have regard generally to existing constituencies as far as possible, as it does not consider that it would be appropriate to start from a 'blank sheet of paper'. However, this does not mean that an existing constituency should be automatically considered to be 'protected from change', simply on the basis of its electorate figure already falling within the statutory range.

Impact on future election results

- 2.14 The BCE is a politically independent and impartial body. It emphasises very strongly that existing voting patterns and the prospective fortunes of political parties should not and do not enter its considerations during a review.

Designating

- 2.15 Each constituency is designated as either a 'county constituency' or a 'borough constituency'. The BCE considers that, as a general principle, where constituencies contain more than a small rural element they should normally be designated as county constituencies. In other cases, they should be designated as borough constituencies. The designation is suffixed to the constituency name and is usually abbreviated: BC for borough constituency and CC for county constituency. The designation generally determines who shall act as Returning Officer for Parliamentary elections. The Returning Officer in borough constituencies is a district or borough council chairman or mayor. For county constituencies it is the high sheriff.

The Proposals

- 2.16 Map A (attached) shows the current Ribble Valley Parliamentary constituency area. This includes the whole of the Ribble Valley Borough area with the additions of the following wards from South Ribble:
- Samlesbury and Walton
 - Coupe Green and Gregson Lane
 - Bamber Bridge East
 - Bamber Bridge West
 - Bamber Bridge North
 - Walton le Dale
 - Tardy Gate
 - Lostock Hall
 - Farington East
 - Farington West
- 2.17 Map B (attached) outlines the new proposed parliamentary constituency of Ribble Valley. This combines the majority of the Ribble Valley Borough area with the following wards from other boroughs:
- Preston Rural East (new addition from Preston)
 - Preston Rural North (new addition from Preston)
 - Ribbleton (new addition from Preston)
 - Fishwick and Frenchwood (new addition from Preston)
 - Walton-le-Dale West (existing addition from South Ribble)
 - Samlesbury and Walton (existing addition from South Ribble)
 - Coupe Green and Gregson Lane (existing addition from South Ribble)
- 2.18 Map C (attached) shows how the three Ribble Valley wards listed are proposed to be added to the Hyndburn constituency:
- Billington and Langho
 - East Whalley, Read and Simonstone
 - Whalley and Painter Wood

Initial consultation period

- 2.19 Those who respond to the consultation are requested to say whether they approve of, or object to, the BCE's proposals. In particular, objectors are advised to say what they

propose in place of the BCE's proposals. An objection accompanied by a viable counterproposal is likely to carry more weight than a simple statement of objection. In this respect – and particularly in light of the importance of Rule 2 (statutory electorate range) – a counterproposal setting out the composition of each constituency in an area will generally be viewed as more persuasive than a proposal for the composition of only one constituency which does not address any knock-on effects on the electorate figures of neighbouring constituencies.

Written representations

- 2.20 The BCE is required to consider all written representations made to it within a statutory eight-week period commencing with publication of the initial proposals. Details of how to make written representations, including the last date for receipt of representations, are published alongside the initial proposals. The BCE will be encouraging all interested parties to contribute views through its consultation website.

Secondary consultation period

- 2.21 Following the eight-week consultation on the BCE's initial proposals, the BCE prepares and then publishes on its website all of the representations that it has received for each region. Once the representations have been published, there is a further statutory six-week period during which people can submit to the BCE written comments on those representations it received during the initial consultation period, for example, challenging or supporting assertions made in a representation. There is also the opportunity during this six-week consultation to make representations at public hearings.

Public hearings

- 2.22 The BCE is required to conduct a minimum of two and maximum of five public hearings in each region of England. These must take place during the six-week secondary consultation period. The precise number and location of public hearings in each region will be determined by the BCE specifically in relation to the nature of the responses it receives to the consultation on its initial proposals, i.e. targeting the holding of hearings to areas where there is particular contention over the proposals and cases being made for competing alternate proposals. The details of venues and dates for the hearings will be announced on the BCE website in due course,

The importance of participation

- 2.23 The BCE wishes to stress very strongly that any person or organisation interested in the proposals for their area is encouraged to exercise their statutory right and make written or oral representations to the BCE, whether for or against the proposals.
- 2.24 Full and timely participation ultimately assists the BCE in gauging more accurately local opinion on its proposals, and consequently increases the likelihood that its final recommendations will be generally acceptable to the majority of those who will have to live and work with them.

Final recommendations and report

- 2.25 The BCE takes into consideration any written representations made in the four-week consultation period about the revised proposals, and then makes its final decisions about whether further modifications need to be made in light of those representations.
- 2.26 When the BCE has decided on its final recommendations for the whole of England, it then drafts and submits a formal written report to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The report, which is also published once the Speaker has laid it before Parliament, contains a description of the review in each region, a textual description of all the final recommendations, and a set of maps to illustrate the existing boundaries and those proposed by the final recommendations.
- 2.27 The submission of the formal final report concludes the BCE's involvement in the constituency review process. The procedure to subsequently implement new

constituencies is the responsibility of the Government.

2.28 A detailed description of the process can be found in the [Guide to the 2023 Review](#) on the Boundary Commission website - <https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>

2.29 The website can be used to:

- view current constituency and local authority boundaries;
- view the proposals for new constituency boundaries; and
- submit a response directly to the BCE about the proposals (during a defined consultation period).

2.30 From the second consultation period onwards, you will also be able to:

- view the responses submitted by others; and
- submit a comment directly to BCE, supporting or contesting a response from somebody else.

2.31 The Consultation is currently open until Monday 2nd August 2021.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – None identified.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None identified.
- Political – None identified.
- Reputation – None identified.
- Equality & Diversity - None identified.

4 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

4.1 Consider how committee wish to respond to the consultation.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

REF:

For further information please ask for Michelle Haworth, extension 4421