

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Special Advisory Group

21 October 2016

Report title	Parliamentary boundary review		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources		
Key decision	n/a		
In forward plan	No		
Wards affected	All		
Accountable director	Kevin O'Keefe, Governance		
Originating service	Democratic Services		
Accountable employee(s)	Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services	
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Report to be/has been considered by	Council	9 November 2016	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Advisory Group is recommended to:

1. Agree the response to the Boundary Commission for England's consultation on Parliamentary constituencies, specifically recommending that the proposed 'Wednesfield and Willenhall' constituency should be renamed 'Wolverhampton North, Wednesfield and Willenhall'.
2. Recommend to Council that the Managing Director should make the consultation response on its behalf via the Commission's online consultation portal.

Recommendations for noting:

The Advisory Group is asked to note:

1. The proposed changes to the Wolverhampton South-east constituency (to be renamed Wolverhampton South and Coseley) and the Wolverhampton South-west constituency (to be renamed Wolverhampton West).

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This paper sets out the Council's proposed response to the Commission's consultation on future parliamentary constituencies.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Boundary Commission for England published draft proposals in 2011 to reconfigure Parliamentary constituencies. The primary objectives were to equalise the number of constituents in each area, taking account of population changes, and to reduce the number of constituencies (in England the proposed impact under the most recent proposals is to reduce from 533 to 501, with a UK change of 650 reducing to 600). It was subsequently agreed to defer a decision until after the 2015 general election. Those proposals have now been updated, based on 2015 electorate data, and published for consultation, with a view to final agreement of the new arrangements in 2018, for implementation at the general election in 2020.
- 2.2 The Commission is conducting a 12 week public consultation exercise, running from 13 September to 5 December. In the West Midlands, this will include four public hearings. The consultation website is www.bce2018.org.uk.

3.0 Impact for the West Midlands

- 3.1 The review has considered the whole West Midlands region, with two sub-regions of (1) Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent and (2) everywhere else. The regional impact is a reduction of six seats, from 59 to 53, one fewer in Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent and five fewer in the other sub-region. Overall, the proposals pay less heed to local authority boundaries than is currently the case, which will inevitably complicate the management of national polls.

4.0 Impact for the City of Wolverhampton

- 4.1 The city currently hosts three Parliamentary constituencies – Wolverhampton South-west, South-east and North-east. Two of these areas consist entirely of City of Wolverhampton wards, with Wolverhampton South-east incorporating the Dudley ward of Coseley. Although the proposals retain three Wolverhampton constituencies, the overall picture is more complicated, with two constituencies drawing in a number of wards from Dudley and Walsall respectively.

- 4.2 The table below summarises the proposals:

Parliamentary constituency	Ward	Local authority
Wolverhampton West (previously Wolverhampton South-west)	Blakenhall	City of Wolverhampton
	Bushbury North	City of Wolverhampton
	Graiseley	City of Wolverhampton
	Merry Hill	City of Wolverhampton
	Oxley	City of Wolverhampton
	Park	City of Wolverhampton
	Penn	City of Wolverhampton
	Tettenhall Regis	City of Wolverhampton
	Tettenhall Wightwick	City of Wolverhampton
Wolverhampton South and Coseley (previously Wolverhampton South-east)	Coseley East	Dudley MBC
	Sedgley	Dudley MBC
	Upper Gornal and Woodsetton	Dudley MBC
	Bilston East	City of Wolverhampton
	Bilston North	City of Wolverhampton
	East Park	City of Wolverhampton
	Ettingshall	City of Wolverhampton
	Spring Vale	City of Wolverhampton
Wednesfield and Willenhall (previously Wolverhampton North-east)	St Peter's	City of Wolverhampton
	Bushbury South and Low Hill	City of Wolverhampton
	Heath Town	City of Wolverhampton
	Fallings Park	City of Wolverhampton
	Wednesfield South	City of Wolverhampton
	Wednesfield North	City of Wolverhampton
	Willenhall North	Walsall MBC
	Short Heath	Walsall MBC
	Willenhall South	Walsall MBC

- 4.3 **Wolverhampton West:** this is effectively an extension of the existing Wolverhampton South-west constituency. Under the current arrangements it falls entirely within the City of Wolverhampton and this will continue if the proposals are approved. The revised constituency would have an electorate of 77,373 (based on existing estimates).
- 4.4 **Wolverhampton South and Coseley:** this is also an extension of the existing arrangement. The existing Wolverhampton South-east constituency already includes Coseley East (from Dudley) and, under the proposed arrangements, will also include two further Dudley wards. The revised constituency would have an electorate of 73,652.

- 4.5 **Wednesfield and Willenhall:** the current Wolverhampton North-east constituency is the subject of most change under the proposals, taking in three wards from Walsall. The revised constituency's electorate would be 77,139.

5.0 The Council's response to the consultation

- 5.1 The Council has the option to respond to the consultation, offering any comments, either for or against the proposals. The Commission also welcomes positive suggestions for amendments to its draft proposals.
- 5.2 Given that a key objective of the review is to equalise the number of constituents across constituencies, it is unsurprising that the Wolverhampton areas have seen some expansion, taking in additional wards from Dudley and Walsall. However, the choice of name for the former Wolverhampton North-east constituency is surprising. Wednesfield and Willenhall are both part of the new constituency, but it also includes Fallings Park, Heath Town, Bushbury South and St Peter's. The last of these is, of course, the city centre of Wolverhampton and not part of either Wednesfield or Willenhall.
- 5.3 Alternative ways of allocating wards in the city to constituencies have been considered (e.g. switching St Peter's with Bushbury North). The consistent obstacle to such a change is ensuring the electorate remains within the Boundary Commission's parameters (approximately 71,000 to 78,500). Because St Peter's is a relatively small ward compared to others in the city, almost every possible reconfiguration results in one constituency being too large (i.e. above the 78,500 ceiling) or geographically illogical (in terms of adjacent areas).
- 5.4 The primary concern about the draft arrangements is that the heart of a major and the Black Country's only city is going to sit within a Parliamentary constituency that does not bear its name. Wednesfield and Willenhall actually only reflects the eastern part of the proposed constituency. Therefore, the simplest solution is to suggest an alternative name for the constituency. Given that Wolverhampton South-east is to become Wolverhampton South (and Coseley), the most obvious suggestion is Wolverhampton North, Wednesfield and Willenhall.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising for the Council as a result of the Boundary Commission's consultation and this report. The cost of delivering Parliamentary elections is fully funded by the government, or proportionally shared when there are combined elections, and the proposed revised arrangements will not affect this.
[MK/03102016/U]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The review is being conducted under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended by the Boundary Commissions Act 1992) and with particular regard to the

Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011, which also made amendments to the 1986 Act.

[TS/03102016/V]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Council is responding to the Boundary Commission's consultation and it is for that body to carry out the necessary equalities analysis in respect of its proposals. However, the Council's own consideration has not identified that the proposed changes will have any detrimental impact on any particular group.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

10.0 Human resources implications

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

11.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 11.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the West Midlands,
Boundary Commission for England, September 2016

NB: full details of all boundary reviews are available at www.bce2018.org.uk.