

TITLE OF REPORT: Consultation on 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's views on the 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review and its implications for Gateshead.

Background

2. Parliamentary constituency boundaries are reviewed periodically. This is principally so that constituencies are altered occasionally to take account of changes in population. Changes are also made to reflect local government boundary changes, so that administrative boundaries coincide as much as possible.
3. The reviews are undertaken by independent Boundary Commissions. There are four Commissions, one each for the four nations of the United Kingdom. For English constituencies the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is responsible.
4. Boundary reviews in 2013 and 2018 aimed at reducing the total number of seats to 600 were either abandoned by the Government before completion or cancelled.
5. The current rules for reviews were approved by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, (2020 Rules) that Act fixed the number of constituencies in the House of Commons at 650.
6. The number of seats between the four nations of the UK are allocated proportionally. This is based on the registered Parliamentary electorate in each part of the UK. There is no longer a guaranteed minimum for any country.
7. The BCE have now been tasked to conduct a review of the parliamentary constituencies in England based on the 2020 Rules. The BCE must complete the current review and make a formal report to the Speaker of the House of Commons before the 1 July 2023.
8. It is important to note that these changes have no direct bearing on the administrative area of the Council or Council functions. However, changes may impact upon our residents who may find that their parliamentary constituency has changed.
9. For the purpose of the review the UK electorate as at 2 March 2020 was used to determine average electorate per constituency and the distribution of

constituencies between the nations of the UK. The result of this is that each constituency, allowing for the statutory 5% variance, must contain between 69,724 and 77,062 Parliamentary electors and a result of this calculation England has been allocated 543 of the 650 UK constituencies.

10. Taking these requirements and other statutory factors into account, the BCE published its initial proposals for England, including the North East on the 8 June 2021.
11. Other statutory factors include:
 - a. Special geographical considerations e.g. mountains lakes rivers
 - b. Local Government boundaries as they exist or were in prospect on 1 December 2020
 - c. Boundaries of existing constituencies
 - d. Any local ties
 - e. The inconveniences attendant on such changes

North East Region

12. The Commission's approach is to sub-divide the allocation of constituencies between the nine English regions, which have historically been the regions used at European Elections.
13. In relation to the North East Region the Commission has allocated 27 constituencies a reduction of 2 from the current 29.
14. Their initial proposals leave two of the existing 29 constituencies wholly unchanged, and 11 with what they describe as only minor non-substantive changes of one to two wards.
15. As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, they have grouped some county and unitary authority areas into sub-regions and based on the relatively recently created combined authorities, which encompass the entire North East region. The number of constituencies allocated to each sub-region has been determined by the combined electorate of the included authorities. Therefore, they have found it necessary to propose some constituencies that cross county or unitary authority boundaries, but are not proposing that any of the proposed constituencies cross any combined authority boundaries.
16. This has resulted in them sub dividing the region as follows

Sub-region	Existing allocation	Proposed allocation
Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland	9	8
County Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland	11	10
Gateshead	2	2
Tees Valley	7	7

Gateshead Proposals

17. In relation to Gateshead the electorate used (144,619) means an entitlement of 1.97 constituencies and has resulted in a proposal of two constituencies that do not cross the authority's boundaries.
18. The Commission found that the current configuration of both Blaydon and Gateshead constituencies are below the permitted electorate range and they proposed, therefore, that the new Blaydon constituency includes Dunston and Teams ward from Gateshead, and that the new Gateshead constituency includes Pelaw and Heworth, and Wardley and Leam Lane from the existing Jarrow constituency.
19. The Commission consider the proposals better adhere to the statutory factors, as both resulting constituencies will be of the right size and be wholly contained within the administrative boundaries of Gateshead. They also respect the additional statutory factors such as geographical considerations, they recognise the River Tyne as an important natural boundary as well as local ties.
20. This will result in the proposed constituencies potentially being

Blaydon constituency <i>(electorate 74,066)</i>	Gateshead constituency <i>(electorate 70,553)</i>
Birtley	Bridges
Blaydon	Chowdene
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	Deckham
Crawcrook and Greenside	Felling
Dunston and Teams	High Fell
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	Lobley Hill and Bensham
Lamesley	Low Fell
Ryton Crookhill and Stella	Pelaw and Heworth
Whickham North	Saltwell
Whickham South and Sunnyside	Wardley and Leam Lane
Winlaton and High Spen	Windy Nook and Whitehills

BCE Consultation Process

21. The 8-week period of consultation by the BCE on its initial proposals began on 8 June. The BCE is required to consider all written representations made to it during this time and representations will be published alongside the initial proposals.
22. The BCE encourage interested parties to contribute views through their consultation website <https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/>
23. Following the 8 weeks consultation period, the BCE will publish on its website all of the representations it has received for each region.

24. Once the representations have been published, there will be a further statutory secondary consultation period for 6 weeks, during which people can submit to the BCE written comments on the published representations.
25. In addition, the BCE is required to conduct a minimum of between 2 and 5 public hearings in each region of England, the precise number and location to be determined by the BCE. A record of all public hearings will be made and published.
26. After the end of the secondary consultation period, all of the representations received from the initial consultation and all written and oral presentations made during the secondary consultation period will be considered and reports will be prepared for each region. The reports will summarise and consider each of the representations, and if the BCE's initial proposals may be revised in light of the representations.
27. Following this, the BCE will publish a report in each region, stating whether revisions have been made to its initial proposals for that region. All the written representations submitted during the 6-week secondary consultation period and transcripts from the public hearings will be published at the same time.
28. If the initial proposals are revised, there would then be a further, final period of 4 weeks for written representations to be made to the BCE on the revised proposals for that region.
29. Once the BCE has taken into account any final representations made in the four weeks consultation period, they will make their final recommendations for the whole of England, it will then draft and submit a formal report to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The report, which will be published, once it has been laid before Parliament, will contain a description of the review in each region, a textual description of all of the final recommendations, and a set of maps to illustrate the existing constituency boundaries and those proposed by the final recommendations.
30. The submission of the formal, final report will conclude the review process.
31. The expected timetable and process is set out below. The current stage of the process is highlighted.

Dec 2020 – March 2021	Boundary Commission for England working with counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to establish the data to be used for the review including the number of constituencies across each part of the UK.
March 2021 – May 2021	Preparing initial proposals
June 2021 – 2 August 2021	Consultation on initial proposals. An 8-week period of consultation.
Early 2022	Second period of consultation (6 weeks) and public hearings.
Late 2022	Final consultation (4 weeks) on “revised proposals”.
By 1 July 2023	Final report and recommendations.

Late 2023	Recommendations made into law with new proposals being used for next general election (but no by-elections in the interim period).
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Recommendations

32. It is recommended that Cabinet support the proposed changes to the Blaydon constituency and Gateshead constituency as described in paragraphs 17 to 20 and authorise the Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance to submit a response to the current BCE consultation.

For the following reason:

To enable Cabinet to confirm its support to the initial proposals for Gateshead and to ensure that the views are recorded and considered by the BCE.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. Electoral administration.

Background

2. The report relates to a periodic review of parliamentary constituency boundaries. Reviews take place principally so that constituencies take account of changes in population in accordance with statutory criteria.
3. The reviews are undertaken by independent Boundary Commissions. For English constituencies the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) is responsible.

Consultation

4. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet members have been consulted on the proposals and are supportive of the recommendations.

Alternative Options

5. Cabinet could choose not to respond to the initial BCE proposals, but that could mean that amendments are subsequently made without the Gateshead position having been set out. This could have a detrimental impact on the final decision on constituency boundaries.

Implications of Recommended Option

6. **Resources:**
 - a) **Financial Implications** – There are no direct financial implications from the proposals.
 - b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no direct human resource implications from the proposals.
 - c) **Property Implications** - there are no property implications arising from the recommendations within this report.
7. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no direct risk management implications from the proposals.
8. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – There are no specific Equality and Diversity Implications.
9. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – there are no Crime and Disorder implications.
10. **Health Implications** – there are no health implications.
11. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – there are no Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications

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12. **Human Rights Implications** – there are no human rights implications arising from this report
 13. **Ward Implications** – if these proposals are followed through to the final report a small number of wards will be allocated within different parliamentary constituencies, but all within the Gateshead administrative area.
 14. **Background Information** - none