

Boundary Review 2018 – Boundary Commission

Policy Context

1. Vision 2030 and the Council Plan set out our aims to ensure equality of opportunity for everyone in Gateshead, ensuring that all residents and businesses can fulfil their potential. This involves ensuring that the needs and aspirations of all local people are responded to through democratically elected and accountable representatives.

Background

2. The Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary boundaries in England. The Commission is currently conducting a review (the 2018 Review) on the basis of rules laid down in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).
3. The 2011 Act prescribes that there will be 600 constituencies for the United Kingdom, down from the current 650. A prescribed mathematical formula has determined the number of constituencies allocated to England for the 2018 Review is 501. Two of these constituencies are expressly reserved for the Isle of White. The Commission has subdivided the remaining constituencies between the regions used for European elections and the allocated number of constituencies for the North East is down from 29 to 25.
4. The 2011 Act requires that, subject to specified exceptions, every constituency must have an electorate that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the 'UK electoral quota'. The UK electoral quota is 74,769 meaning that no constituency can have an electorate smaller than 71,031 or larger than 78,507.
5. The 2011 Act states that when establishing a new map of constituencies the Commission may take the following into account:
 - Special geographical considerations (including the size, shape and accessibility of the constituency)
 - Local government boundaries as they existed on 7 May 2015
 - Boundaries of existing constituencies
 - Any local ties which would be broken by changes in constituencies.
6. The Commission published its initial proposals on 13 September 2016 and those relating to Gateshead are detailed below;
 - **Blaydon BC** – Blaydon, Crawcrook & Greenside, Dunston Hill & Wickham East, Ryton Crookhill & Stella, Wickham North, Wickham South & Sunnyside
 - **Gateshead BC** – Bridges, Chowdene, Deckham, Dunston & Teams, Felling, High Fell, Lobley Hill & Bensham, Low Fell, Pelaw & Heworth, Saltwell, Windy Nook & Whitehills
 - **Jarrow BC** – Wardley & Leam Lane,
 - **North Durham & Chester-Le-Street CC** – Lamesley

- **Sunderland West BC** – Birtley
- **West Durham and Teesdale CC** – Chopwell & Rowlands Gill, Winlaton & High Spen

7. The Council's proposed response is set out in the attached annex.

Consultation

8. The proposals were considered by the Leader and the Corporate Resources Advisory Group on 17 October 2016.

Alternative Options

9. The Council could accept the Commission's initial proposals and choose not to respond to the consultation.

Implications of Recommended Option

10. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – None
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – None
- c) **Property Implications** - None

11. Risk Management Implication - None

12. Equality and Diversity Implications - None

13. Crime and Disorder Implications – None

14. Health Implications - None

15. Sustainability Implications - None

16. Human Rights Implications - None

17. Area and Ward Implications - None

Background Information

18. The following documents have been used in preparing this report

- The Boundary Commission for England – A guide to the 2018 Review
- The Boundary Commission for England – Initial Proposals for the North East
- The Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011

Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

Response to the initial proposals of the Boundary Commission for England

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The initial proposals by the Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) set out what might be described as wholesale changes to the Parliamentary electoral arrangements for the North East region. In response to the consultation on these proposals, this submission highlights a range of implications in relation to Gateshead and its residents and identifies possible alternative arrangements that would mitigate at least some of the adverse effects of the necessary reduction in the number of constituencies under this review.
- 1.2. The 2002 Parliamentary Boundary Review, the recommendations from which were implemented at the 2010 Parliamentary elections, resulted in a step in the right direction for Gateshead. That review greatly rationalised the constituency boundaries within the Borough, bringing 91% of the Borough's electorate into constituencies together with only Gateshead electors. The initial proposals under the 2018 review, however, represent a major regressive step in that none of the proposed constituencies are completely coterminous with Gateshead's boundaries. If implemented unchallenged, the proposals would result in 32,575 of Gateshead's 140,942 electorate (23%) being distributed into constituencies whose primary area of focus is on the needs of electors resident in areas other than Gateshead. The proposals also bring into Gateshead's administrative control 44,773 electors from areas outside of Gateshead's primary area of focus, which is no doubt of concern for electors in both Newcastle and Sunderland.
- 1.3. Central to the 2018 review process is the electoral quota as set out in the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituency Act 2011 (PVSC Act). This provides, as the primary executive principle of the review, a condition of prohibitive inflexibility. The imposition of a maximum permissible deviation from the quota of just 5% greatly impedes the range of potential options and is inevitably central to the issues arising from the initial proposals. Whilst the scope of the consultation does not invite representations on the legislation driving the review process, an emphasis of this prohibitive inflexibility must be similarly central to any submission in response.
- 1.4. This response acknowledges the stringent limitation placed on the Commission. It accepts that there is no course but to adhere to the quota system and that this will have caused great difficulties in the formulation of proposals. Similarly, the alternative arrangements advocated below are formulated to satisfy the legislative framework as it stands. With that concession, however, it is felt that concerns regarding the limited permissible deviation are legitimate and that the Commission has a duty to express these concerns to Government on behalf of respondents. Therefore, it must be stated that a larger permissible deviation from the quota would have greatly increased the range of options open to the Commission and would have better served the electorate for whose collective benefit the review process is intended.
- 1.5. Having accepted that the principle of the electoral quota severely limits what the Commission can achieve under this review, there is, however, still room for criticism

of the proposals. The primary objective of balancing constituency electorates relegates the status of other considerations, such as local ties and the integrity of local government boundaries rendering them little more than secondary concerns. These are not, however, to be wholly dismissed. Scope to bear other factors in mind *is* provided in the primary legislation and it is felt that this provision should be utilised to its greatest practicable extent.

- 1.6. It is conceded that it is not possible for any set of proposals to accommodate every local concern. Where it appears, however, that these concerns have not been given due consideration, when there is clearly scope and capacity to do so, it seems only fair to ask that alternative arrangements be considered in order to accommodate those concerns.
- 1.7. The ‘counter’ proposals set out below address primarily the issues relating to the Borough and people of Gateshead and to Gateshead Council as an administrative body. Whilst other local authorities in the region will doubtless share many of the same concerns, no attempt is made here to anticipate or address these. A degree of sensitivity to the needs of others is, however, exercised in order to ensure that solutions for Gateshead are not presented to the detriment of our neighbours.
- 1.8. This submission identifies a number of issues arising from the initial proposals and raises concerns regarding the possible implementation of these plans. It questions the process by which the Commission arrived at these proposals and stresses certain factors deemed appropriate for consideration under the PVSC Act. Ultimately, this response strives to present tenable alternatives and a cogent case in support of these.

2. Comments on the Commission Proposals

- 2.1. The relevant electorate for Gateshead extends to 140,942 electors. This figure is 1.89 times the electoral quota and, although it is recognised is not sufficient for two complete constituencies within Gateshead, it is sufficient for one constituency wholly coterminous with Gateshead’s administrative boundaries and one shared constituency. Despite this, the Borough has been divided somewhat arbitrarily between 6 constituencies, which in comparison with the proposed allocations in neighbouring authorities, is disproportionate with no evident purpose beyond balancing constituency electorates.
- 2.2. There is a strong feeling amongst Gateshead councillors, the officers supporting them and, more significantly, the electorate they serve that Gateshead has been treated as little more than a sacrificial lamb for the region used to maintain equilibrium amongst constituencies falling predominantly outside the Borough.
- 2.3. The table below details the relevant electorate figures for each of the local authorities in the North East region.

Local Authority	Electorate	Electorate Divided by Electoral Quota	Minimum Number of constituencies	BCE Proposals		
				Number of Constituencies (part or whole)	Whole Constituencies	Part Constituencies
Darlington		1.00	1	1	1	0

	74,929					
Co. Durham	377,715	5.05	5	6	1	5
Hartlepool	68,201	0.91	1	2	0	2
Middlesbrough	90,162	1.21	2	3	0	3
Redcar and Cleveland	100,365	1.34	2	2	0	2
Stockton-on-Tees	137,838	1.84	2	3	1	2
Northumberland	232,448	3.11	3	4	3	1
Gateshead	140,942	1.89	2	6	0	6
Newcastle upon Tyne	180,183	2.41	3	3	1	2
North Tyneside	151,045	2.02	2	2	2	0
South Tyneside	115,022	1.54	2	2	1	1
Sunderland	205,546	2.75	3	6	1	5

- 2.4. It is clear from the figures shown above that most local authority electorates are not of suitable size to support only whole constituencies and that shared administration of some constituencies is inevitable. What is also clear, however, is that under the Commission's proposals the number of shared constituencies is disproportionate. Gateshead has been divided between six constituencies which is three times as many constituencies than the minimum number their electorate necessitates. This is the same number of constituencies as both Sunderland and Co Durham, which have significantly greater electorates, with Co Durham, in particular, having more than double the electorate.
- 2.5. The PVSC Act states that local government boundaries are one of the additional factors that may be taken into account when determining future constituency boundaries. Evidently, some significance was attached to the integrity of local authority boundaries at the legislative stage. Certainly, beyond satisfying the electoral quota, this is foremost amongst any consideration from an administrative perspective. However, the significance of this seems to have fallen by the wayside during the formulation of these initial proposals.
- 2.6. These proposals create a real sense that very little consideration has been given to the integrity of local authority boundaries when in fact these should have been of considerable concern. Instead, it appears that for no better reason than the sake of ease, all wards across the region have been treated as generic building blocks to be distributed on no other basis than balancing electorates.
- 2.7. It should be noted that increasing the technical ease of the review process was *not* a provision made in the primary legislation. There *was*, however, provision for local government boundaries to be taken into account.

2.8. Further provision was made in the PVSC Act to respect and protect any local ties that might be jeopardised by changes to constituency boundaries. This principle does not seem to have been consistently applied. In the text setting out the initial proposals, the Commission outlines particular efforts made in order to include certain areas wholly within single constituencies. Equal effort does not seem to have been universally applied, however, and no justification is ventured as to why certain areas are given greater consideration than others.

2.9. These initial proposals are deeply unpopular within Gateshead. Under the Commission's proposals three of Gateshead's wards, namely; Wardley and Leam Lane, Birtley and Lamesley, would be isolated into three separate constituencies where there are no local ties. A further two wards, namely; Winlaton and High Spen and Chopwell and Rowlands Gill, are being annexed into a constituency which extends from Blaydon as far down as Barnard Castle.

2.10. Within Winlaton and High Spen and Chopwell and Rowlands Gill, the main concerns are as follows:

- A significant proportion of residents of Winlaton and High Spen ward live in Blaydon. Residents in both Winlaton and High Spen and Chopwell and Rowlands Gill look towards Blaydon, Gateshead and Newcastle for work, leisure, education, further travel (links to other areas by train, coach air or sea), health provision, social care provision, highways etc. In other words they function as a part of the large Tyneside conurbation.
- The residents of these wards share interests in common concern with their fellow residents of Gateshead and have no affiliation with West Durham.
- Inclusion in West Durham and Teesdale constituency would cause real problems for many people wishing to attend their Member of Parliament's (MP) surgeries, which would presumably be held some considerable distance away in what is proposed to be an extremely large constituency. Service by public transport in these areas is relatively infrequent and these links focus more on eastward travel towards the conurbations of Gateshead and Newcastle. The relationship between many electors and their representative would be significantly weakened due to their difficulty in accessing surgeries because of transport issues. Those most affected would be those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale and the elderly - arguably those whose needs most require representation.
- Inclusion in a constituency falling entirely outside their own county, the name of which makes no reference to their own area, will not only offend many electors but is also likely to cause widespread confusion. The disaffection likely to grow within the electorate will doubtless take its toll on engagement levels and turnout as many electors feel that their views are not important enough and begin to question the value of expressing their democratic franchise.
- There is no relationship evident between the factors provided for consideration under the PVSC Act and the proposal to include these wards in West Durham and Teesdale constituency. The effect of this is to devalue and marginalise these electorates. The common perception is that their collective concerns are not

regarded as fit for consideration and that they are no more consequential as a group than numbers on an electoral balance sheet.

2.11. Within Birtley and Lamesley, the main concerns are as follows:

- Birtley ward has no ties with Sunderland Council; every aspect of its governance has historically been administered in Gateshead. The residents of this ward share interests in common concern with their fellow residents of Gateshead and in particular those resident in Lamesley ward, a significant proportion of whom live in Birtley. It is felt that continuity between the representation of these common interests at local and national level is essential.
- The A1 motorway physically separates the Birtley ward from Sunderland. This is a very real barrier which would result in the ward being isolated from the rest of the proposed Sunderland West constituency.
- Being placed on the southern extremity of the Borough, care must be taken to combat the peripheral nature of these areas and foster an atmosphere of inclusivity. These proposals, however, have the converse effect. The prevailing perception is that these wards represent Gateshead's 'sacrificial lamb' of this boundary review. The proposed separation of these two wards from the rest of the Borough is perceived as the abandonment of these electorates in favour of retaining residents in other areas whose concerns are of greater consequence.
- There is a growing concern that the disillusionment likely to proliferate as a result of isolating these wards into constituencies on their own will adversely affect levels of engagement and reduce participation in the democratic process. Any MP for these constituencies would inevitably situate their office in the heart of the area and amongst its greatest concentration of population.
- There will inevitably be widespread confusion amongst the electorate regarding their inclusion in a constituency which falls outside their local authority area and whose name bears no reference to their own area.

2.12. The fact that Gateshead would be more significantly affected under these proposals than other local authority areas renders residents feeling resentful and devalued. As in other areas of the Borough, this will breed disaffection within the electorate, causing people to question the benefit of any engagement with the democratic process.

2.13. Experience has shown that the people of Gateshead are fiercely proud of their local identity. At the 2010 Parliamentary election there was a degree of uproar within the Borough following the implementation of changes resulting from the 2002 Parliamentary Boundary Review. One of the most contentious changes made under that review concerned certain polling districts which were moved into Jarrow constituency. The prevailing attitude amongst the electorate in these districts was one of indignation. The common perception was that these areas were being jettisoned and were no longer to be considered part of Gateshead. What would the MP for Jarrow know of *their* area? What would they even care?

- 2.14. Within Wardley and Leam Lane there continues to be resentment amongst the electorate that they vote within a constituency with which they have no local ties and with which they feel they have been placed merely to make up the numbers.
- 2.15. The Commission's initial proposals are likely to render, amongst the electors being displaced from Gateshead, a feeling of isolation from the rest of the Borough. Rather than fostering a feeling of Parliamentary fellowship amongst constituents these boundaries will create a sense of not belonging. Many electors will feel marginalised and irrelevant; an attitude detrimental to democratic participation.
- 2.16. When the boundary changes from the previous review were implemented at the 2010 Parliamentary election, Electoral Services officers were inundated with complaints. Despite there being a legitimate rationale for these changes and despite them having limited bearing on the quality of electors' parliamentary representation, many electors' anger could not be placated. A great deal of time and resources were expended in explaining the process by which electors had come to find themselves in a different constituency and in trying to justify this.
- 2.17. Although the administrative burden placed on local authorities is not explicitly cited in the PVSC Act as being a necessary consideration of the review, it is surely a valid factor for consideration under the provision to take into account local government boundaries. Consideration of local ties is provided for separately; so of what other significance are local government boundaries if not from an administrative perspective?
- 2.18. Any unnecessary additional strain placed on those local government administrators responsible for conducting Parliamentary elections needlessly jeopardises their ability to successfully deliver these events. Surely, beyond reducing the number of MPs and ensuring the implementation of the electoral quota, the ability of administrators to perform their duties with no unnecessary risk to the integrity of polls should be a paramount concern of this boundary review.
- 2.19. Due consideration of this issue is not evident in the Commission's initial proposals for the North East. The proliferation of constituencies with shared administration, in some cases between three authorities, shows a lack of understanding of the implications these shared constituencies have. Though some instances of this are inevitable under the electoral quota system, it is felt that more could have been done to keep them to a minimum.
- 2.20. Parliamentary constituencies that cross local authority boundaries cause particular problems at combined elections and they are likely to become the norm rather than the exception in Gateshead. The administration of the Parliamentary poll becomes shared between the administrative staff of the Returning Officers with jurisdiction over two or potentially three local authority areas. One Returning Officer will be designated by the Secretary of State for Justice to have the administrative lead and will then deputise the other(s) to enable them to function with executive powers. Each will make arrangements for the polling stations and absent voters in their own area(s), with issues relating to the Parliamentary polls taking precedence over any other event with which they are combined.
- 2.21. The effect of this is to convolute the administrative process. Rather than being able to make unilateral decisions the Parliamentary Returning Officer must consider the

implications for any other subordinate polls in the neighbouring area(s); in turn the Deputy Returning Officer(s) must defer to the Parliamentary Returning Officer for certain crucial decisions. The result is that the planning and administration of these combined polls becomes something of a committee process.

2.22. The range of issues that must be carefully considered from the perspective of administrative partners at combined polls is extensive. There are implications for postal voting; with ballot papers being verified and counted at different locations they must be provided to electors in separate postal packs or else subordinate ballot papers must be couriered daily from a single return address to a second location. In polling stations, ballot papers must similarly be cast in separate boxes or else at the close of poll must *all* be verified at the Parliamentary count venue before subordinate papers are couriered to the location of the count for the other poll. Ballot paper allocations must be reconciled, staffing levels determined, contingency plans agreed and software compatibility issues overcome. The list of considerations, some seemingly trivial, some of more obvious import, is extensive and must not be underestimated.

2.23. Sharing the administration of just a single constituency results in a great deal of time and effort being expended by senior officers travelling to and from meetings to determine a wide range of processes. Increasing this burden to the extent that it is proposed for Gateshead Council threatens to overwhelm the capacity of senior officers when ordinary demand on them is at its greatest. It must be stated that the effect of overburdening those officers charged with delivering Parliamentary elections greatly increases the risks that must be mitigated against and creates a danger that the integrity of polls could be jeopardised.

2.24. A further reduction in the quality of electors' experience of the democratic process will result from the likely confusion the initial proposals would cause if implemented. A significant part of the electorate is already confused by the various levels of democratic representation. Adding to this confusion is the fact that their address falls simultaneously within two distinctly separate electoral areas for the various levels of governance. In order to keep confusion to a minimum it is vital that as much continuity as possible be maintained between local and Parliamentary electoral areas. This is something that the initial proposals simply do not strive to achieve.

2.25. This lack of continuity does not only do the electorate a disservice but also makes the situation more complicated for elected representatives. Where constituencies straddle local authority boundaries, maintaining working relationships between local government councillors and MPs becomes collectively more complicated and problematic. This is especially the case where local authority wards have been annexed into extremely large constituencies (in the case of Gateshead's western wards and West Durham and Teesdale constituency) where face to face meetings would become time consuming and difficult.

3. Gateshead Council's Proposals

3.1. Gateshead's primary aim is to reduce the number of Gateshead's electors surrendered to constituencies falling predominantly outside the Borough. Gateshead recognises that it is not possible to formulate counter proposals that would resolve the issues of all affected wards.

3.2. Gateshead hopes to achieve, as a bare minimum, one consolidated Parliamentary constituency, fully coterminous with Gateshead Council's administrative boundaries, incorporating no electors from neighbouring local authority areas, and to reduce the number of shared constituencies.

3.3. Below are several options which are presented as alternatives to the initial proposals from the Commission. Certain changes to the wards of neighbouring authorities have been recommended to accommodate the changes within Gateshead. Whilst efforts have been made to recommend only sensible and practicable arrangements, it is recognised that Gateshead is not fully conversant with the interrelationships of the communities of other local authorities. The options that have been put forward improve the position for Gateshead electors but also satisfy the quota system in all the constituencies affected.

3.4. In formulating the recommendations under these options, Gateshead Council has endeavoured to deviate as little as possible from the initial proposals of the Commission.

Options for a Gateshead coterminous constituency

3.5. Option 1: Reclaiming Lamesley and Birtley wards into Gateshead constituency

3.5.1. This option would result in one complete Gateshead constituency wholly within the administrative boundaries of Gateshead and three shared constituencies as opposed to the Commission's initial proposals which have Gateshead split between six shared constituencies.

3.5.2. This option could also potentially be combined with option four below.

3.5.3. Under this proposal, the aim is to reclaim Lamesley ward from North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency and Birtley ward from Sunderland West constituency into Gateshead constituency.

3.5.4. In order to achieve this it is proposed that Pelaw and Heworth ward would move back into Jarrow constituency. Washington West ward from Gateshead constituency and Washington North ward from Jarrow constituency would move into Sunderland West constituency. Washington South ward from Sunderland West constituency would move into North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency.

3.5.5. The proposed Gateshead constituency and the wards it would include are as follows:

- **Gateshead** (electorate – 75,135)
Bridges, Chowdene, Deckham, Dunston & Teams, Felling, High Fell, Lobley Hill & Bensham, Low Fell, Saltwell, Windy Nook & Whitehills Lamesley and Birtley

3.5.6 Implications :

- Gateshead and Sunderland would no longer be required to share administrative responsibilities for two constituencies which will be of benefit to the residents of both authorities.

- The arrangements under this option show a greater respect for the integrity of local authority boundaries.
- The constituencies recommended under this option give due consideration, more than the Commission proposals, to issues of local identity.
- Returning Pelaw and Heworth to Jarrow constituency would have less of an impact on those residents as they are already in Jarrow constituency and have recognised local ties with Hebburn.

3.5.7 Tables detailing the full list of the North East constituencies recommended under this option are provided in Appendix 1. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507.

3.6 **Option 2: Reclaiming Wardley and Leam Lane ward into Gateshead constituency**

3.6.1 This option is another alternative proposal which would result in one complete coterminous Gateshead constituency and four shared constituencies.

3.6.2 This option could also potentially be combined with option four below.

3.6.3 Under this proposal, the aim is to move Wardley and Leam Lane ward from Jarrow constituency into Gateshead constituency.

3.6.4 In order to achieve this it is proposed that Washington West from Gateshead constituency would move into Jarrow constituency.

3.6.5 The proposed Gateshead constituency and the wards it would include are as follows:

- **Gateshead** (electorate – 74,533)
Bridges, Chowdene, Deckham, Dunston & Teams, Felling, High Fell, Lobley Hill & Bensham, Low Fell, Saltwell, Windy Nook & Whitehills, Pelaw and Heworth and Wardley and Leam Lane.

3.6.6 Implications:

- This option has found room within the legislative framework and the initial proposals to accommodate the needs of Gateshead whilst creating virtually no knock on effect for neighbouring authorities
- Gateshead and South Tyneside would no longer have to share a constituency

3.6.7 If this option cannot be achieved, as a bare minimum, it is requested that Pelaw and Heworth, who have recognised local ties with the Hebburn community be retained in Jarrow constituency and Wardley and Leam Lane who have no recognised local ties, be moved into Gateshead constituency.

3.6.8 Tables detailing the full list of the North East constituencies recommended under this option are provided in Appendix 2. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507.

3.7 **Option 3: Reclaiming Winlaton and High Spen ward into Blaydon constituency and creating a coterminous Gateshead constituency**

- 3.7.1 In formulating this option, Gateshead looked at ways to reclaim both Chopwell and Rowlands Gill and Winlaton and High Spen wards. Due to the restrictive nature of the electoral quota, whilst potential revised constituencies in respect of Gateshead could be achieved, it was not possible to formulate practical alternative solutions that would meet the electoral quota requirements in both Newcastle and Durham.
- 3.7.2 Although practical alternatives are not available in relation to Chopwell and Rowlands Gill, it is important to note that Councillors and residents in that ward are deeply unhappy with the proposal that they move into West Durham. Although they were historically part of County Durham, the break with Durham in terms of employment, education, health and leisure is almost totally complete with residents now looking to Blaydon, Gateshead and Newcastle as part of the wider Tyneside conurbation.
- 3.7.3 This option, therefore, looked at one solution that would reclaim Winlaton and High Spen back into Blaydon constituency. This would result in one complete Gateshead constituency wholly within the administrative boundaries of Gateshead and four shared constituencies.
- 3.7.4 Under this proposal, the aim is to reclaim Winlaton and High Spen ward from West Durham and Teesdale constituency into Blaydon constituency.
- 3.7.5 In order to achieve this it is proposed that Washington West ward would move into Sunderland West constituency. Birtley ward would move from Sunderland West constituency into North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency. Annfield Plain from North Durham and Chester Le Street would move into West Durham and Teesdale. Dunston Hill and Whickham East from Blaydon constituency would move into Gateshead constituency.
- 3.7.6 The proposed Blaydon constituency and the wards it would include are as follows:
- **Blaydon** (electorate – 75,717)
Blaydon, Crawcrook and Greenside, Ryton, Crookhill and Stella, Whickham North, Whickham South and Sunnyside, Benwell and Scotswood, Elswick, Denton, Lemington, Newburn and Winlaton and High Spen
- 3.7.7 Implications:
- Chopwell & Rowlands Gill would be included with County Durham districts.
 - Birtley and Lamesley wards would be together in North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency.
 - Gateshead would no longer share any constituencies with Sunderland.
- 3.7.8 Tables detailing the full list of the North East constituencies recommended under this option are provided in Appendix 3. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507.

Alternative Options

3.8 **Option 4: Reclaiming Winlaton and High Spen ward into Blaydon constituency**

3.8.1 This is an alternative option that would reclaim Winlaton and High Spen back into the Blaydon constituency. On its own, this option does not reduce the number of shared constituencies, it can however, be combined with either option one or two above or option five below.

3.8.2 It is proposed that this option can be combined with option one above as a means of reclaiming the maximum number of Gateshead's electorate.

3.8.3 Under this proposal, the aim is to reclaim Winlaton and High Spen ward from West Durham and Teesdale constituency into Blaydon constituency.

3.8.4 In order to achieve this it is proposed that Denton ward would move from Blaydon constituency into Newcastle North West constituency. Ponteland and East Stannington ward would move from Newcastle North West constituency into Hexham and Morpeth constituency. South Tynedale ward would move from Hexham and Morpeth constituency into West Durham and Teesdale constituency.

3.8.5 The proposed Blaydon constituency and wards it would include are as follows:

- **Blaydon** (electorate – 74,947)
Winlaton and HighSpen, Blaydon, Crawcrook and Greenside, Dunston Hill and Whckham East, Ryton, Crookhill and Stella, Whickham North, Whickham South and Sunnside, Benwell and Scotswood, Elswick, Lemington and Newburn

3.8.6 Implications;

- Chopwell & Rowlands Gill would be included with County Durham districts.

3.8.7 Tables detailing the full list of the North East constituencies recommended under this option are provided in Appendix 4. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507.

3.9 **Option 5: Moving Birtley from Sunderland West into North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency**

3.9.1 This option on its own results in five shared constituencies.

3.9.2 This option could also potentially be combined with option two above which would then result in one complete coterminous Gateshead constituency and three shared constituencies. This option can also be combined with option four.

3.9.3 Under this proposal the aim is to move Birtley ward from Sunderland West into North Durham and Chester Le Street.

3.9.4 In order to achieve this it is proposed that Lumley ward would move from North Durham and Chester Le Street into Sunderland West constituency.

3.9.5 Implications:

- Birtley and Lamesley wards would be together in North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency.
- Gateshead would no longer share any constituencies with Sunderland.

3.9.6 Tables detailing the full list of the North East constituencies recommended under this option are provided in Appendix 5. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1. It is not the attitude amongst Gateshead's councillors nor residents that Gateshead should receive any form of preferential treatment; simply that Gateshead should not unfairly bear the brunt of the impact of this boundary review
- 4.2. The process of this boundary review was inevitably going to be fraught with difficulties and the Commission's task of implementing the necessary reduction in constituencies within the prohibitive prerequisite of 5% maximum deviation from the quota is an unenviable one.
- 4.3. Whilst some allowance must be made for what has doubtless been a difficult and time consuming process for the Commission, their initial proposals fall far short of what might have been achieved, even under the legislative framework as it currently stands. It is clear that a priority of easing procedural burden has taken precedence over valid considerations explicitly provided for under the PVSC Act. Provision for these considerations was made, presumably, in order to limit the impact of this review on the electorate by respecting certain factors likely to be deemed important. Accommodating these additional factors doubtless makes an already difficult task even more arduous for the Commission; however, this is not a legitimate cause for this vital aspect of the review process to have been so flagrantly ignored.
- 4.4. A clear case has been made here against proposals that simply do not adequately serve the residents of Gateshead. If these initial proposals are taken forward, the integrity of Parliamentary representation will be profoundly destabilised and undermined for a large portion of the population and the democratic process will be made less accessible to many people who arguably rely on it most. In addition to this, the various factors which will increase the strain placed on administrators will put at risk the mechanism of electors' franchise and jeopardise the integrity of results.
- 4.5. Aside from offering a disconnected and fragmented level of representation to Gateshead's electorate, our councillors consider these initial proposals send a very negative message to the people of the Borough. The message is that Gateshead doesn't matter. The message is that Gateshead as an entity, along with any pride that people feel in being a part of it, is irrelevant. This perception is not simply the product of some collective insecurity or imagined slight; it is the result of Gateshead bearing the brunt of this review and emerging worse off than almost any other authority within the region.

- 4.6. Gateshead's primary recommendations to the Commission with regard to the electoral arrangements are, therefore, simple: limit the unnecessary fragmentation of the Borough of Gateshead simply for the benefit of others.
- 4.7. The options have been put forward as a measure to resolve some of the issues faced by Gateshead as a result of the initial proposals put forward by the Commission. It has not been possible to make suggestions that would resolve all of those issues. Gateshead is of the opinion that any knock on effect for their neighbouring authorities are minimal and in general terms these options have been shown to improve the overall performance of the initial proposals put forward by the Commission
- 4.8. Option 1 – This option would result in a reduction of the Commission's initial proposals of six shared constituencies to one coterminous Gateshead constituency and three shared constituencies. It is the opinion of Gateshead's councillors and officers that an extremely compelling argument would need to be made against this option to justify anything less than full implementation. Although this option would result in Pelaw and Heworth returning to Jarrow constituency it is felt that this would be more palatable as the residents of Pelaw and Heworth do at least have a level of continuity and there are some recognised local ties with the area. This option, if combined with option 4, would also improve the position in relation to the residents of Winlaton and High Spen.
- 4.6.1 Option 2 – This option would result in a reduction of the Commission's initial proposals of six shared constituencies to one coterminous Gateshead constituency and four shared constituencies. If this option cannot be achieved, as a bare minimum, it is requested that Pelaw and Heworth, who have recognised local ties with the Hebburn community be retained in Jarrow constituency and Wardley and Leam Lane who have no recognised local ties, be moved into Gateshead constituency. This option, if combined with option 4, would also improve the position in relation to the residents of Winlaton and High Spen.
- 4.9. Option 3 – This option would result in a reduction of the Commission's initial proposals of six shared constituencies to one coterminous Gateshead constituency and four shared constituencies. In the event that option 1 cannot be achieved this option would improve Gateshead's position in relation to the residents of Winlaton and High Spen. This option would also be a better solution for the residents of Birtley as opposed to the Commission's initial proposals.
- 4.10. Option 4 – if combined with option 1 or option 2, would further improve Gateshead's position in relation to the residents of Winlaton and High Spen.
- 4.11. Option 5 – in the event that option 1 cannot be achieved, this option would be a better solution for the residents of Birtley. This option would result in a reduction of the Commission's initial proposals of six shared constituencies to five.

Appendix 1

Option 1: Reclaiming Lamesley and Birtley wards into Gateshead constituency

The tables below detail the constituencies recommended under this option. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507

Gateshead constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal	
Gateshead BC	
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Washington West	8,978
Electorate	77,539

Option 1	
Proposed Gateshead BC	
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Lamesley	6,963
Birtley	5,984
Electorate	75,135

Jarrow constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal	
Jarrow BC	
Wardley and Leam Lane	5,972
Bede	5,956
Fellgate and Hedworth	5,835
Hebburn North	6,930
Hebburn South	6,234
Monkton	6,307
Primrose	6,293
Simonside and Rekendyke	6,324
Castle	8,332
Redhill	8,107
Washington North	8,183
Electorate	74,473

Option 1	
Proposed Jarrow BC	
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Wardley and Leam Lane	5,972
Bede	5,956
Fellgate and Hedworth	5,835
Hebburn North	6,930
Hebburn South	6,234
Monkton	6,307
Primrose	6,293
Simonside and Rekendyke	6,324
Castle	8,332
Redhill	8,107
Electorate	72,663

North Durham and Chester le Street constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal North Durham and Chester-le-Street CC	
Lamesley	6,963
Annfield Plain	5,670
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
Lumley	5,527
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	71,773

Option 1 Proposed North Durham and Chester-le-Street CC	
Washington South	7,846
Annfield Plain	5,670
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
Lumley	5,527
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	72,656

Sunderland West constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Sunderland West BC	
Birtley	5,984
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Washington South	7,846
Electorate	72,720

Option 1 Proposed Sunderland West BC	
Washington West	8,978
Washington North	8,183
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Electorate	76,051

Appendix 2

Option 2: Reclaiming Wardley and Leam Lane ward into Gateshead constituency

The tables below detail the constituencies recommended under this option. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507

Gateshead constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Gateshead BC	
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Washington West	8,978
Electorate	77,539

Option 2 Proposed Gateshead BC	
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Wardley and Leam Lane	5,972
Electorate	74,533

Jarrow constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Jarrow BC	
Wardley and Leam Lane	5,972
Bede	5,956
Fellgate and Hedworth	5,835
Hebburn North	6,930
Hebburn South	6,234
Monkton	6,307
Primrose	6,293
Simonside and Rekendyke	6,324
Castle	8,332
Redhill	8,107
Washington North	8,183
Electorate	74,473

Option 2 Proposed Jarrow BC	
Bede	5,956
Fellgate and Hedworth	5,835
Hebburn North	6,930
Hebburn South	6,234
Monkton	6,307
Primrose	6,293
Simonside and Rekendyke	6,324
Castle	8,332
Redhill	8,107
Washington North	8,183
Washington West	8,978
Electorate	77,479

Appendix 3

Option 3: Reclaiming Winlaton and High Spennard ward into Blaydon constituency and creating a coterminous Gateshead constituency

The tables below detail the constituencies recommended under this option. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507

North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal North Durham and Chester Le Street BC	
Lamesley	6,963
Anfield Plain	5,670
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
Lumley	5,527
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	71,773

Option 2 Proposed North Durham and Chester Le Street BC	
Birtley	5,984
Lamesley	6,963
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
Lumley	5,527
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	72,087

Sunderland West constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Sunderland West	
Birtley	5,984
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Washington South	7,846

Option 2 Proposed Sunderland West	
Washington West	8,978
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Washington South	7,846

Electorate	72,720
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Electorate	75,714
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Gateshead constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Gateshead BC	
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Washington West	8,978
Electorate	77,539

Option 2 Proposed Gateshead BC	
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	6,586
Bridges	5,316
Chowdene	6,892
Deckham	6,371
Dunston and Teams	5,823
Felling	5,586
High Fell	5,895
Lobley Hill and Bensham	6,860
Low Fell	6,910
Saltwell	5,470
Windy Nook and Whitehills	7,065
Pelaw and Heworth	6,373
Electorate	75,147

Blaydon constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Blaydon BC	
Blaydon	6,953
Crawcrook and Greenside	6,659
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	6,586
Ryton, Crookhill and Stella	6,818
Whickham North	6,307
Whickham South and Sunnyside	6,483
Benwell and Scotswood	8,020
Elswick	6,495
Denton	7,356
Lemington	7,030
Newburn	6,894
Electorate	75,601

Option 2 Proposed Blaydon BC	
Winlaton and High Spen	6,702
Blaydon	6,953
Crawcrook and Greenside	6,659
Ryton, Crookhill and Stella	6,818
Whickham North	6,307
Whickham South and Sunnyside	6,483
Benwell and Scotswood	8,020
Elswick	6,495
Denton	7,356
Lemington	7,030
Newburn	6,894
Electorate	75,717

West Durham and Teesdale constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal West Durham and Teesdale CC	
Barnard Castle West	6,319
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	6,954
Winlaton and High Spen	6,702
Benfieldside	6,180
Burnopfield and Dipton	5,962
Consett North	5,761
Consett South	2,886
Crook	8,995
Delves Lane	6,026
Lanchester	5,871
Leadgate and Medomsley	6,440
Weardale	6,406
Electorate	74,502

Option 2 Proposed West Durham and Teesdale CC	
Barnard Castle West	6,319
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	6,954
Benfieldside	6,180
Burnopfield and Dipton	5,962
Consett North	5,761
Consett South	2,886
Crook	8,995
Delves Lane	6,026
Lanchester	5,871
Leadgate and Medomsley	6,440
Weardale	6,406
Annfield Plain	5,670
Electorate	73,470

Appendix 4

Option 4: Reclaiming Winlathon and High Spen ward into Blaydon constituency

The tables below detail the constituencies recommended under this option. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507

Blaydon constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal	
Blaydon BC	
Blaydon	6,953
Crawcrook and Greenside	6,659
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	6,586
Ryton, Crookhill and Stella	6,818
Whickham North	6,307
Whickham South and Sunnyside	6,483
Benwell and Scotswood	8,020
Elswick	6,495
Denton	7,356
Lemington	7,030
Newburn	6,894
Electorate	75,601

Option 4	
Proposed Blaydon BC	
Winlathon and High Spen	6,702
Blaydon	6,953
Crawcrook and Greenside	6,659
Dunston Hill and Whickham East	6,586
Ryton, Crookhill and Stella	6,818
Whickham North	6,307
Whickham South and Sunnyside	6,483
Benwell and Scotswood	8,020
Elswick	6,495
Lemington	7,030
Newburn	6,894
Electorate	74,947

West Durham and Teesdale constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal	
West Durham and Teesdale CC	
Barnard Castle West	6,319
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	6,954
Winlathon and High Spen	6,702
Benfieldside	6,180
Burnopfield and Dipton	5,962
Consett North	5,761
Consett South	2,886
Crook	8,995
Delves Lane	6,026
Lanchester	5,871
Leadgate and Medomsley	6,440
Weardale	6,406
Electorate	74,502

Option 4 Proposed West Durham and Teesdale CC	
South Tynedale	3,831
Barnard Castle West	6,319
Chopwell and Rowlands Gill	6,954
Benfieldside	6,180
Burnopfield and Dipton	5,962
Consett North	5,761
Consett South	2,886
Crook	8,995
Delves Lane	6,026
Lanchester	5,871
Leadgate and Medomsley	6,440
Weardale	6,406
Electorate	71,631

Newcastle upon Tyne North West constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Newcastle upon Tyne North West BC	
Ponteland East and Stannington	3,297
Blakelaw	7,696
Fenham	7,521
Kenton	7,498
West Gosforth	7,128
Castle	8,578
Fawdon	7,035
Parklands	7,562
Westerhope	7,443
Woolsington	7,521
Electorate	71,279

Option 4 Proposed Newcastle upon Tyne North West BC	
Blakelaw	7,696
Fenham	7,521
Kenton	7,498
West Gosforth	7,128
Castle	8,578
Fawdon	7,035
Parklands	7,562
Westerhope	7,443
Woolsington	7,521
Denton	7,356
Electorate	75,338

Hexham and Morpeth constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Hexham & Morpeth CC	
Longhorseley	2,297
Pegswood	709
Ponteland North	507
Rothbury	3,957
Bellingham	3,050
Bywell	3,457
Corbridge	3,353
Haltwhistle	3,583
Haydon and Hadrian	3,321
Hexham Central with Acomb	3,235
Hexham East	3,228
Hexham West	3,177
Humshaugh	3,244
Ponteland North	3,137
Ponteland South with Heddon	3,351
Ponteland West	3,275
Prudhoe North	4,112
Prudhoe South	3,739
South Tynedale	3,831
Stocksfield and Broomhaugh	3,808
Longhorseley	904
Morpeth Kirkhill	4,015
Morpeth North	3,650
Morpeth Stobhill	3,502
Pegswood	3,124

Option 4 Proposed Hexham & Morpeth CC	
Ponteland East and Stannington	3,297
Longhorseley	2,297
Pegswood	709
Ponteland North	507
Rothbury	3,957
Bellingham	3,050
Bywell	3,457
Corbridge	3,353
Haltwhistle	3,583
Haydon and Hadrian	3,321
Hexham Central with Acomb	3,235
Hexham East	3,228
Hexham West	3,177
Humshaugh	3,244
Ponteland North	3,137
Ponteland South with Heddon	3,351
Ponteland West	3,275
Prudhoe North	4,112
Prudhoe South	3,739
Stocksfield and Broomhaugh	3,808
Longhorseley	904
Morpeth Kirkhill	4,015
Morpeth North	3,650
Morpeth Stobhill	3,502
Pegswood	3,124

Electorate	77,566
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Appendix 5

Electorate	77,032
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Option 5: Moving Birtley from Sunderland West into North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency

The tables below detail the constituencies recommended under this option. The electorates of all constituencies to which changes are proposed are within 5% of the electoral quota, being no lower than 71,031 and no higher than 78,507

North Durham and Chester Le Street constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal North Durham and Chester Le Street CC	
Lamesley	6,963
Annfield Plain	5,670
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
Lumley	5,527
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	71,773

Option 2 Proposed North Durham and Chester Le Street	
Birtley	5,984
Lamesley	6,963
Annfield Plain	5,670
Chester-le-Street East	2,919
Chester-le-Street North	2,999
Chester-le-Street South	5,937
Chester-le-Street West Central	5,825
Craghead and South Moor	5,177
North Lodge	2,828
Pelton	9,889
Sacrison	5,357
Stanley	6,187
Tanfield	6,495
Electorate	73,470

Sunderland West constituency:

Initial BCE Proposal Sunderland West	
Birtley	5,984
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Washington South	7,846

Option 2 Proposed Sunderland West	
St Chad's	7,547
Sandhill	7,976
Shiney Row	9,719
Silksworth	8,109
St Anne's	8,084
Washington Central	8,654
Washington East	8,801
Washington South	7,846
Lumley	5,527

Electorate	72,720
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Electorate	72,263
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