

TITLE OF REPORT: Boundary Commission for England - 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies - Revised Proposals

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

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the Revised Proposals published by the Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') in its 2023 Parliamentary Boundary Review ('the Review') and seek Cabinet's agreement to recommend full Council grants authority to the Chief Executive to respond to the proposals on behalf of the Council.

Background

2. At its meeting on 22 March 2022 Cabinet agreed to recommend to full Council that the proposed changes to the Blaydon constituency and Gateshead constituency under the Review (which brought both constituencies covering the borough wholly within the borough boundary) be supported, and to authorise officers to respond accordingly as part of the formal consultation process. The recommendation was agreed unanimously by full Council at its meeting on 24 March 2022, and a written submission was made, as well as representations in person at the public hearing held in Newcastle on 28/29 March 2022.
3. The Commission has now published its Revised Proposals (8 November 2022), which differ significantly from those initially proposed.
4. The proposed constituencies covering the borough of Gateshead in the Revised proposals are set out below (showing the Gateshead wards *and neighbouring authority wards* included in each):

Blaydon & Consett	Gateshead & Whickham
Blaydon Chopwell and Rowlands Gill Crawcrook and Greenside Ryton Crookhill and Stella Winlaton and High Spen <i>Burnopfield and Dipton</i> <i>Leadgate and Medomsley</i> <i>Benfieldside</i> <i>Consett North</i>	Bridges Chowdene Deckham High Fell Lobley Hill and Bensham Low Fell Saltwell Dunston and Teams

<i>Consett South</i> <i>Delves Lane</i>	Whickham North Dunston Hill and Whickham East Whickham South and Sunnyside
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Jarrow	Washington
Felling Windy Nook and White Hills Pelaw and Heworth Wardley and Leam Lane <i>Hebburn North</i> <i>Hebburn South</i> <i>Fellgate and Hedworth</i> <i>Monkton</i> <i>Primrose</i> <i>Bede</i> <i>Boldon Colliery</i>	Lamesley Birtley <i>Washington West</i> <i>Washington South</i> <i>Washington North</i> <i>Washington Central</i> <i>Washington East</i> <i>Castle</i> <i>Redhill</i>

- In a major shift from the Initial Proposals, in which there were two constituencies covering the Borough and wholly within the borough boundary, there are now four, three of which cross the borough boundary with South Tyneside, Sunderland and Durham. Eleven Gateshead wards (i.e. half) fall within these three constituencies, none of which bears the name Gateshead.
- The Commission provided the following narrative in support of the revisions:

In considering all the evidence, the Assistant Commissioners noted the support from Gateshead councillors for our initial proposal of two constituencies together coterminous with the Gateshead local authority, but concluded that this advantage was outweighed by the disadvantages in terms of the disruption of local ties, particularly in Sunderland, but also into County Durham.... While regretting the loss of the two coterminous Gateshead constituencies, we acknowledge the wider benefits to be gained across the sub-region as a whole that this allows, and therefore agree with these recommendations. ('Revised proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the North East region' BCE, November 2022)

Proposal

- It is proposed that the Council makes further written representation to the Commission as part of the final consultation stage of the Review. This could be informed by a Members' Seminar on the Revised Proposals, in which members will be invited to comment on them and suggest representations to be made as part of the Council's written submission.

8. Potential points to make in the written submission include:

- Increase in cross-boundary constituencies affecting the borough (statutory factor b), including into a county authority (with a different local election cycle)
- Degree of change from existing constituencies (statutory factor c)
- Lack of local ties between east Gateshead and Jarrow; Lamesley, Birtley and Washington; and Blaydon and Consett: potential impact on election turnout (statutory factor d)
- Inclusion of ‘Gateshead’ in the constituency names to link the constituency with the borough: e.g. ‘Central Gateshead’ for *Gateshead and Whickham*, and inclusion of ‘Gateshead East’ and ‘Gateshead South’ with *Jarrow and Washington*, respectively.

9. The 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 not by-elections in the interim period).

Recommendations

10. Cabinet is asked to recommend to full Council that it authorises the Chief Executive to prepare and submit a response to the Revised Proposals, making representations regarding the matters highlighted in this report, following a Members’ Seminar and consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition.

For the following reason:

To enable the Council to make written representations to the Revised Proposals by the deadline of 5 December 2022.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. Electoral administration, political representation and community identity. (Council Pledge: *work together and fight for a better future 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 current rules for reviews were approved under the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 2020, ('the 2020 Rules') which fixed the number of constituencies in the House of Commons at 650.
4. 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 1 July 2023.
5. It is important to note that these changes have no direct bearing on the administrative area of the Council or Council functions (other than elections). However, changes may impact upon our residents who may find that their parliamentary constituency has changed.
6. The Commission is also required to ensure that each proposed constituency has an electorate as at 2 March 2020 that is no less than 95% and no more than 105% of the UK electoral quota. This quota has been calculated at 73,393. Accordingly, each constituency must have an electorate that is no smaller than 69,724 and no larger than 77,062.
7. 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
8. 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.
9. The Commission's approach was to sub-divide the allocation of constituencies between the nine English regions, which have historically been the regions used at European Elections.

10. In relation to the North East Region the Commission has allocated 27 constituencies: a reduction of 2 from the current 29. The Commission's initial proposals aimed to wholly contain each of these constituencies within the North East region
11. Their initial proposals left 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.
12. As it has not always been possible to allocate whole numbers of constituencies to individual counties, the Commission grouped some county and unitary authority areas into sub-regions based on the relatively recently-created three 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.
13. 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

14. 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.
15. 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 included Dunston and Teams ward from Gateshead, and that the new Gateshead constituency included Pelaw and Heworth, and Wardley and Leam Lane from the existing Jarrow constituency.
16. At that stage the Commission considered the proposals to better adhere to the statutory factors, as both resulting constituencies would have been of the right size and be wholly contained within the administrative boundaries of Gateshead. They also respected the additional statutory factors such as geographical considerations, recognised the River Tyne as an important natural boundary as well as local ties.
17. The publication of the Initial Proposals was followed by an eight week consultation period (8 June – 2 August 2021). The Commission was required to consider all written representations made to it during this time and representations have been published on the [BCE reviews website](#).

18. Cabinet considered the initial proposals on 20 July 2021 and supported the BCE proposals for Gateshead, and this was submitted into the initial consultation.
19. This was followed by a second of consultation period of 6 weeks (March – April 2022) including a number of public hearings being held across England. The Leader of the Council attended one of the hearings held in Newcastle and, in agreement with the Leader of the Opposition, spoke on behalf of all Gateshead Councillors in support of the Initial Proposals as the related to the Gateshead borough area.
20. The then Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services (Ged Morton) also spoke, confirming the formal, unanimous agreement of the Council to support the Initial Proposals.
21. The Commission published its Revised Proposals on 8 November 2022. The Commission's report *Revised proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the North East region (November 2022)* can be found here: [2022-11-08 BCE Revised Proposals A4 report NORTH EAST Accessible.pdf](#). an interactive map showing the revised proposals, along with existing constituencies, the initial proposals, local authority boundaries, and local authority wards, is available here: [North East | BCE Consultation Portal \(bcereviews.org.uk\)](#)
22. Written representations may be made before 5 December 2022, following which the Commission intends to publish its Final Proposals and report and recommendations (which are made to the Speaker of the House of Commons) on 1 July 2023.
23. No further modifications can be made to the proposals following that date, and they then become effective from the next General Election.

Consultation

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

Alternative Options

25. Cabinet could choose not to respond to the BCE's Revised Proposals and not make a recommendation to the full Council; but that would mean there would be very little prospect of any changes to the Revised Proposals sought by the Council being implemented.

Implications of Recommended Option

26. 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.

27. **Risk Management Implication** – There are no direct risk management implications from the proposals.
28. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – There are no specific Equality and Diversity Implications.
29. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – there are no Crime and Disorder implications.
30. **Health Implications** – there are no health implications.
31. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** – there are no Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications
32. **Human Rights Implications** – there are no human rights implications arising from this report
33. **Ward Implications** – if the Revised Proposals are followed through to the final report, eleven of Gateshead's twenty-two wards (i.e. half) will be allocated within parliamentary constituencies crossing the borough boundary, and not bearing the name 'Gateshead'.
34. **Background Information** - none